

NEGRO SLAVERY IN UTAH

by

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INTRODUCTION

That Negro slavery did in fact exist in Utah from 1847 until the end of the Civil War, is a painful realization to many Mormons. It is painful because it seems to be in direct opposition to long held religious convictions. Some Utahns today are amazed at such a claim for two reasons: first, they have been led to believe that slavery could not have existed anywhere but in the South; and second, a people as concerned about moral and religious values as Mormons would not have allowed it to exist among them. The first contention usually erupts from a shaky foundation of American History; slavery seems to be automatically connected with the South and only the South in the untrained mind. The possibility of any spread of the institution is usually not considered. And the second is based on a lack of acquaintance with Mormon History specifically, and especially of Mormon attitudes. Since both of these arguments are founded on ignorance, the study of slavery in Utah becomes an intriguing one. Controversial or little-known facts always lend themselves well to historical examination. In order to make any kind of contribution to this topic, it will be necessary to draw some conclusions. A philosopher of history, W. H. Walsh makes a timely comment:

It has been said that whilst it is certainly not the business of historians to predict the future, it is very much their business to "retrodict" the past: to establish, on the basis of

present evidence, what the past must have been like.¹

Since little is generally known about slavery in Utah, it will be the design of this work to establish what it must have been like. Lack of written material, as well as evidence that is both scant and scattered, are contributing factors to the present lack of understanding of the topic. It is to be regretted that such an interesting practice in the history of Utah has been so plainly neglected. This lack of information has made research both difficult and time consuming. Nevertheless, a dearth of information only increases the need of the study as well as interest in it.

A consideration of slavery as it was practiced in the South will be necessary at the outset, to provide groundwork for its practice in Utah. An understanding of the origin of the institution in the United States and of the way in which it became a tradition seems important before considering its effect in Utah. But the central question of why it spread to Utah, and why it was able to endure, is the important one. For this reason, a group of unconnected facts would be useless in this historical examination. While this work cannot be an exact reproduction of the past, it can make an analysis of the research materials examined. Walsh's comments are worth consideration:

The historian is not content to tell us merely what happened; he wishes to make us see why it happened too. In other

¹W. H. Walsh, Philosophy of History: An Introduction (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 41.

words, he aims...at a reconstruction of the past which is both intelligent and intelligible.²

A study of Negro slavery in Utah would be worthless without some attempt to explain why it existed. An examination of the motives behind its practice is even more significant than slavery itself. For without a study of motives, those who doubt its existence would remain unsatisfied and unconvinced. And such an examination must include a consideration of Mormon doctrine, as well as opinions of Mormon leaders; for religious teaching played a vital role in developing motives among Utahns. It will also be necessary to consider those brief comments available from non-Mormon observers of Utah in relation to slavery; this will provide a more balanced view. It is hoped, then, that the evidence and explanation here presented will both establish what Negro slavery must have been like, as well as to explain why it existed, so that this episode from the past will appear "both intelligent and intelligible."

²Ibid. 32.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES

Controversial as well as interesting, the institution of slavery in the United States has been the object of numerous studies of various kinds over the years. Obviously, the nature and conclusions of these studies have varied depending on the individual student involved.

Charles A. Beard, widely-known historian and proponent of the "New History" together with James Harvey Robinson, enunciates this point when reviewing his relations with Robinson:

During our last hours together we discussed Theodore Lessing's devastating book: History Writing as the Noble Art of Putting Your Own Meaning into the Meaningless. Robinson was delighted with the book. It confirmed him in his long matured conviction that the idea of a purely objective history of complicated events as they actually had been was an illusion of the nineteenth century. The historian simply cannot know the history of a period or of a country as it actually was. He cannot reproduce in relations, proportions, and perspective the multitudinous events and possibilities as they were in the actuality of the past.

Here Beard explains his own view that no historical work can be written from a completely objective point of view. History of its very nature must be subjective; in other words, the historian cannot know history as it actually was because his personal convictions and prejudices color his viewpoint. Therefore, the facts he organizes and presents must have some interpretation. As Beard says, "Facts do not

¹Charles A. Beard, "James Harvey Robinson," Journal of Adult Education, VIII (June 1936), 248.

ask or answer any questions...what is to be done about the facts will depend upon sources of conviction, prejudice, and opinion which lies in part, if not wholly, outside the facts that are excavated."² What is more, some selection of the facts is necessary. Beard professed that no historian can present all of the facts about a given event or process no matter how complete his analysis may be. Of necessity he must select only a few of the many facts, and "any selection, except one made by lot, is an interpretation, no matter how vehemently the historian protests his innocence of ideas."³ His stress of the subjectivity of his historical work was prevalent in his later philosophy. In his earlier days he had thought objectivity possible and had written many works with this view in mind, such as An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution. With the dawn of the 1930's, his views evolved into relativism. It was a later Beard who wrote to a friend concerning Economic Interpretation: "Why history is just a cat dragged by its tail to places it rarely wants to go. Another man, with a different social view, could have used the same materials and written a volume with the opposite effects."⁴

It is with this realization that the writer will consider the background of slavery in the United States, as groundwork for consideration of slavery in Utah. Certainly slavery as a historical topic has

²Charles A. Beard, "Anti-Trust Racket," New Republic, XCVI (Sept. 21, 1938), 183.

³Charles A. Beard, "Time, Technology, and the Creative Spirit in Political Science," American Political Science Review, XXI (Feb. 1927), 127.

⁴Eric F. Goldman, "The Origins of Beard's Economic Interpretation of the Constitution," Journal of the History of Ideas, XIII (1952), 246, 247.

been "dragged by its tail to places it rarely wants to go." And it has been too often the case that a historian with a "different social view" has "used the same materials and written a volume with the opposite effects." Consider, for instance, the differing conclusions of two noted scholars on the topic of slavery, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, and Kenneth Stampp. Phillips, in his well-known work on slavery sums up the institution as follows:

The government of slaves was for the ninety and nine by men, and only for the hundredth by laws. There were injustice, oppression, brutality and heartburning in the regime—but where in the struggling world are these absent? There were also gentleness, kind-hearted friendship and mutual loyalty to a degree hard for him to believe who regards the system with a theorist's eye and a partisan squint. For him on the other hand who has known the considerate and cordial, courteous and charming man and woman, white and black, which that picturesque life in its best phases produced, it is impossible to agree that its basis and its operation were wholly evil, the law and the prophets to the contrary notwithstanding.

A competent historian, Phillips nevertheless represents one social view, that of a Southern observer. Kenneth Stampp, a Northern-born historian, expresses a differing view:

Slaveholders asked for pity from no one, least of all from abolitionists. Yet, who could withhold it? Who could help but feel compassion for men who found nothing more inspiring than the sterile rhetoric and special pleading of the pro-slavery argument to justify the institution upon which they lived? The pathos in the life of every master lay in the fact that slavery had no philosophical defense worthy of the name—that it had nothing to commend it to posterity, except that it paid.

Imperative to obtain at the outset is an awareness of the contro-

⁵Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery (New York and London: D. Appleton Co., 1918), 514.

⁶Kenneth Stampp, The Peculiar Institution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 422.

versial nature of the topic. Various studies though based clearly on facts, have produced widely differing conclusions and interpretations. It is this aspect, however, which makes the study of slavery in the United States even more fascinating; its very divergency creates room for deeper thought and analysis. Stanley Elkins makes a significant observation:

Despite the vast amount of writing on American Negro slavery and the great variety of temperaments and talents that have been brought to the work, the very spiritual agony inherent in the subject itself imposes on the result a certain simplicity of organization and a kind of persistent rhythm. The primary categories of organization for over a century have continued to be those of right and wrong. To the present day, the rhythm of "right" and "wrong" which characterized ante-bellum discourses on the subject of slavery has retained much of its original simplicity and vigor. Certain inhibitions, moreover, have stood guard throughout. There is a painful touchiness in all aspects of the subject; the discourse contains almost too much immediacy, it makes too many connections with present problems. How a person thinks about Negro slavery historically makes a great deal of difference here and now.

The historical background of slavery in America reaches back to the early slave trade of Europe, England, and New England. The introduction of slavery into America came as part of the process of discovery and colonization. Extensive efforts were made shortly after 1500 to import Negro slaves into the Spanish West Indies. English sea captains obtained great profits through supplying Spanish-American settlements with slaves. After the establishment of England's own colonies in North America, these slave trading efforts increased.⁸ Greater activity

⁷ Stanley M. Elkins, Slavery, A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 1.

⁸ J.G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1961), 52.

in English slave trading interests was a mark of the American colonial period. W. E. B. Du Bois estimates that "in the heyday of the slave trade, from 40,000 to 100,000 Negroes were taken out of Africa each year."⁹

Apparently, the slave trade was a brutal activity. The slave traders would bring the Negroes in slave caravans through hundreds of miles of jungle, and then herd them into unsanitary slave ships, where neither the space nor the ventilation was adequate, and food and water scarce. An eye witness described "400 wretched beings...crammed into a hold 12 yards in length—and only 3½ feet in height...the suffocating heat of the hold, the smoke of their torment, and the fifty-four crushed and mangled corpses lifted up from the slave deck next day."¹⁰ In 40 days 175 slaves died in passage while many others died after landing. Slaves in passage were branded with a hot iron like cattle. They were held in chains, and discipline was administered by beatings and murder.¹¹ Seasickness, scurvy, dysentery, small pox, and ophthalmia (disease of the eye) caused misery which was indescribable when added to the then customary dangers and hardships of the sea. Phillips estimates the mortality on the average ship from available data at eight or ten per cent.¹²

Finally, by an act passed in 1794, Congress prohibited the slave

⁹W. E. B. Du Bois, Suppression of the African Slave Trade (New York: Social Science Press, 1954), 5.

¹⁰Randall and Donald, 53.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Phillips, 37.

trade from the United States to any foreign country; on March 2, 1806, the importation of slaves into the United States was prohibited from and after January 1, 1808. In 1820, the slave trade was classed as piracy and made punishable by death. Even though most Northerners supported them, these laws were ineffective; importation of slaves continued as an illicit traffic, the illegal trade being even worse and more brutal than before.¹³

In the meantime, the institution of slavery became firmly established in America. Through a gradual evolutionary process, the codes and practices which made the institution familiar, developed. In analyzing the South, Oscar and Mary Handlin attribute these developments to social practice:

After a period of experimentation and uncertain control, during which time the Negroes were usually called "servants," the legal institution of slavery gradually took shape, the laws being the result of social practice.¹⁴

Social practice or custom, then, evolved into law; slave codes were established as a means of legally controlling slaves. Soon these codes were accepted as binding:

At the heart of every code was the requirement that slaves submit to their masters and respect all white men... Any number of acts, said a North Carolina judge, may constitute "insolence"---it may be merely "a look, the pointing of a finger, a refusal or neglect to step out of the way when a white person is seen to approach. But each of such acts violates the rules of propriety, and if tolerated, would destroy that subordination, upon which our social system rests."¹⁵

¹³ Randall and Donald, 55.

¹⁴ Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," William and Mary Quarterly, VII (April 1950), 199.

¹⁵ Stamp, 207, 208.

Of major interest here is this judge's description of the need for subordination of the Negro, and especially his characterization of slavery as a "social system" rather than an economic one. Slaves were denied standing in court and their testimonies were not accepted against those of white witnesses. In some cases, crimes committed by slaves were given a heavier penalty than if committed by whites. Slaves were not to leave the masters' premises except by special permission. Slaves were forbidden to beat drums, blow horns, or possess guns; and their cabins were to be searched regularly for weapons. They were not to administer drugs to whites or practice medicine. A slave could not have liquor in his possession, or purchase it without a written order from his owner.¹⁶ Slaves could not form secret societies, and must step off the sidewalk when whites wished to pass. It was a forbidden practice to teach slaves to read or write. Since slaves were the actual property of their masters, they were not permitted to own property themselves unless the master agreed to it. If a slave were converted to Christianity, his freedom was not given as a result of such conversion. Negroes in general were assumed to be slaves unless they could prove otherwise. Possession by a master was regarded as "presumptive evidence of legal ownership."¹⁷

Commenting on the rigidity of these codes, Randall and Donald report:

There was, however, such a vast difference between the laws on paper and the system that existed in reality that it would be unhistorical to judge the slave regime in the South

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Phillips, 499.

by this or that severe law which might be found by digging up old codes. The laws, especially where they were most drastic, were not strictly applied. Slaves were, in fact, taught to read and write; they did go abroad in a manner forbidden by statute; they did congregate despite laws forbidding their assembling. Members of the legislature satisfied their sense of social duty by passing severe laws; and the people paid as much or as little attention to the laws as they saw fit.¹⁸

Southern historian Francis Butler Simkins supports this conclusion by commenting that "in actual practice restrictions upon the Negroes were not so severe as the laws provided."¹⁹ It is clear at least that there was room for flexibility in the treatment of slaves, providing the owner wished to take advantage of it. Whether or not such flexibility was acted upon was a matter left to the individual slave owner.

On the issue of slave brutality, Simkins notes that "the master of this establishment was neither the tyrant pictured in the abolitionist fiction nor the improvident and sacrificial gentleman of romance."²⁰ Allowing for variations in human personalities, there was obviously a difference in the manner various slave owners believed slaves should be treated. "It is a pity," said one North Carolina planter, "that agreeable to the nature of things slavery and tyranny must go together and that there is no such thing as having an obedient and useful slave, without the painful exercise of undue and tyrannical authority."²¹ Evidently, some planters were sure that this was the

¹⁸ Randall and Donald, 59.

¹⁹ Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 125.

²⁰ Ibid. 134.

²¹ Stamp, 141.

nature of things; they believed that brutality was actually an inherent part of the institution. But there were definitely many who believed otherwise. Stamp, in concurring with Simkins, says that "masters were not all alike. Some governed their slaves with great skill and induced them to submit with a minimum of force. Others, lacking the personal qualities needed to accomplish this, governed inefficiently."²²

An American slave himself, Frederick Douglass gives a convincing and emotional account for the prevalent brutality of slavery. He relates his experience of learning to run a team of oxen on order from a new master. He tells of being lost in the woods, thrown from the wagon violently, and several times losing control of the oxen. Almost killed in the encounter, he tells of his master's lack of sympathy and subsequent execution of punishment:

On my return, I told Mr. Covey what had happened, and how it happened. He ordered me to return to the woods again immediately. I did so, and he followed on after me. Just as I got into the woods, he came up and told me to stop my cart, and that he would teach me how to trifle away my time, and break gates. He then went to a large gum tree, and with his axe cut three large switches, and after trimming them up neatly with his pocket-knife, he ordered me to take off my clothes. I made him no answer, but stood with my clothes on. He repeated his order. I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip myself. Upon this he rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger, tore off my clothes, and lashed me till he had worn out his switches, cutting me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after. This whipping was²³ the first of a number just like it, and for similar offences.

Douglass relates countless whippings he endured, as well as many others he witnessed, all of which were extremely brutal. According to

²² Ibid. 142.

²³ Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, ed. by Benjamin Quarles (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 90.

his account then, slavery was nothing but brutal, and should be characterized as such. Convinced of the unhappy state of slaves in general, Douglass further comments:

I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the North, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion.²⁴

The experience of Douglass, at least, was one of brutality and misery. And of course his writings as well as his speaking tours were executed as a crusade. It is certain that such conditions were common to the institution and were widely practiced; Stampff affirms that "the records of the plantation regime clearly indicate that slaves were more frequently overworked by calloused tyrants than overindulged by mellowed patriarchs."²⁵ A prominent slaveholder from South Carolina, however, differs on the degree of brutality. James Henry Hammond uses the argument that bad treatment was not a wise practice for the slaveholder. "A bad master," he says, "loses the esteem and respect of his fellow-citizens to as great an extent as he would for the violation of any of social and most of his moral obligations." Hammond firmly propounds the idea that slaveholders were for the most part "kind masters, as men usually are kind husbands, parents and friends—as a general

²⁴ Ibid. 38.

²⁵ Stampff, 80.

rule, kinder."²⁶

It is certainly a plausible argument that a slave was after all important to the success of the planter's work; a sick or badly beaten slave was of very little value in producing crops. A slave owner was concerned about the health of his productive animals such as horses and cattle. As property and as an investment, they needed proper care. Likewise a thoughtful slaveowner would realize the importance of maintaining the health of a slave to insure his productive capacity:

Slavery was above all a labor system. Wherever in the South the master lived, however many slaves he owned, it was his bondsmen's productive capacity that he generally valued most. And to the problem of organizing and exploiting their labor with maximum efficiency he devoted much of his attention.²⁷

Simkins supports Stamp's argument, affirming the need of giving proper care to important property:

Slavery had another side. Abolitionist assertions that the bondsmen were frequently inadequately clothed, underfed, and driven to death are economically unreasonable. Masters wished to preserve the health and life of their slaves because a sick Negro was a liability and a dead Negro was worth nothing.²⁸

And there is some indication that the slave learned to realize his worth. Nevins comments that "as the advancing slave learned to know his own worth, he refused to accept the doctrine of an immutable slave system."²⁹ The old belief that almost all slaves were contented

²⁶ James Henry Hammond, "Letters on Slavery," quoted in Slavery in the South, ed. by Harvey Wish (New York: Farrar, Straus. and Co., 1964), 264.

²⁷ Stamp, 34.

²⁸ Simkins, 127.

²⁹ Allan Nevins, Ordeal of the Union (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1947), I, 543.

with their life is open to question. Negro-White relations developed a great amount of tension in the 1850's. Allan Nevins further comments:

Some sought to break down the system by insurrection. The list of plots, sporadic outbreaks, and revolts during the decade is long, and it is perhaps significant that the election years of 1856 and 1860, with their pervasive excitement, brought reports of widely-ramified conspiracies. Other slaves resisted servitude by flight, many thousands running away. Still others resorted to economic weapons. Their supposed laziness was frequently a type of passive resistance, while direct sabotage through the destruction of property or maiming of livestock was far from unknown. Slaves who were hard-pressed by brutal masters might assert³⁰ their personalities by impudent language or physical assault.

Obviously, a slave who was continually whipped would soon sink low in productive capacity, and any profit ordinarily gained through his efforts would be eliminated. Besides this, danger of insurrections would increase sharply with continued whippings. It seems safe to assume that most slaveholders were at least aware of this fact, and further that it governed their treatment of slaves to a great extent. If a slaveholder was to profit from his ownership of slave property, he knew he would have to give them proper care.

The question as to what degree slavery was a profitable institution has long been debated. A noted historian of the South, Charles Sydnor, makes some interesting observations about the early period of slavery:

In the early 1830's many persons in the South Atlantic states were despondent over the economic condition of their region. A member of the Virginia legislature of 1831-32 compared the original fertility of the land with the present "condition of the slaveholding portion of this commonwealth---barren, desolate, and seared as it were by the avenging hand

³⁰Ibid.

of heaven." Another bemoaned the fact that "our towns are stationary, our villages almost everywhere declining." A third asserted that "if you will go into the credit stores and pop-shops, (with which the whole country is thronged) you will find that, with very few exceptions, the slaveholder has there become very deeply entangled--the embarrassment mainly incurred to clothe and feed his slaves. The slave is clothed and fed, that he may labor for victuals and clothes---a beautiful operation! Thus sir, the master of the slave absolutely belongs to the merchant, and has to labor---and labor hard--- for their benefit. He is literally their bondsman."³¹

Most modern students of the slave problem believe that it was not profitable.³² In the thirty or forty years that a slave might be expected to do effective work, there were a number of expenses a slaveholder had to meet. These expenses could encroach dangerously on his margin of profit. The cost of buying or rearing the slave, amortization of the capital investment, and insurance against running away were some of the more important ones. In the event of premature death or disability during illness or old age, the slaveholder was left without profit.³³ Stamp, however, provides an answer for this cogent argument:

Moreover, it must be remembered that the typical master of the upper South had inherited his slaves and had not purchased them at the high prices of the late ante-bellum period. When his profit is figured on the basis of the original cash investment, rather than at current slave prices,³⁴ it was substantially higher and usually quite adequate.

³¹Charles S. Sydnor, The Development of Southern Sectionalism 1819-1848, A History of the South (Louisiana State University Press: Littlefield Fund for Southern History of the University of Texas, 1953), V. 249.

³²Simkins, 129.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Stamp, 411.

Stampp further argues that since slavery showed no sign of decay, it was probably justifying itself economically. And "during the 1850's slavery did in fact give much evidence of continued vigorous growth. Slave prices were higher than ever before, and everywhere in the South the demand for Negro labor exceeded the supply."³⁵ He stresses his contention that the institution was at least much more profitable than most historians usually admit. "In the final analysis, the high valuation of Negro labor during the 1850's was the best and most direct evidence of the continued profitability of slavery."³⁶ He also notes that slave labor had several competitive advantages over free white labor; it was paid less; that is, the average wage of a free laborer was much higher than the general maintenance costs of a slave. And second, masters exploited women and children more completely than did the employers of free labor. The slave also worked longer hours under a more rigid discipline.³⁷

Hugging the middle of the road, Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer argue that slavery was profitable to a limited extent. The role of the lower South was the production of staples, chiefly cotton; that of the upper South was the production of slaves, exporting them to the staple-crop areas when there was an increase. Conrad and Meyer argue that if these two regions of the South are considered as an economic unit, "slavery was profitable to the whole South, the

³⁵ Ibid. 388.

³⁶ Ibid. 414.

³⁷ Ibid. 400.

continuing demand for labor in the Cotton Belt insuring returns to the breeding operation on the less productive land in the seaboard and border states."³⁸ Further they comment:

In sum, it seems doubtful that the South was forced by bad statesmanship into an unnecessary war to protect a system which must soon have disappeared because it was economically unsound. This is a³⁹ romantic hypothesis which will not stand against the facts.

In summing up the problem of profitability, they point out the following:

Although profitability cannot be offered as a sufficient guaranty of the continuity of Southern slavery, the converse argument that slavery must have destroyed itself can no longer rest upon allegation of unprofitability or upon assumptions about the impossibility of maintaining and allocating a slave labor force.⁴⁰

It is clear from the evidence examined that slavery was profitable to at least a limited extent; certainly the extent that this was true would not satisfy every student's concept of profit. But as Conrad and Meyer affirm, it is no longer plausible to assume that the institution was dying out at the time of the Civil War because of lack of sufficient profit. The fact that slavery held its own as an economic institution must of necessity be recognized. Whether this economic influence was overshadowed by the social implications is another matter of conjecture. James Ford Rhodes, a Southern scholar, makes these observations:

³⁸ Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "The Economics of Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Political Economy, LXVI (April 1958), 121.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 122.

From being regarded as an evil, slavery began to be looked upon as the only possible condition of the existence of the two races side by side and by 1850 the feeling had grown to be that slavery was "no evil,⁴¹ no scourge, but a great religious, social and moral blessing."

Certainly slavery had become ingrained into the life of the Southern people; besides a way of life, it was a protective social measure. And it was no evil, but a "great religious, social and moral blessing." Negroes, they believed, were destined to be slaves for life by the very nature of things. Since Negroes were innately inferior, keeping them in bondage was the only humane course to follow. In bondage they were happier and more useful to society. Randall and Donald note:

But by the 1830's the Southern states had come to believe that slavery was the necessary basis of their section's economy and, what is even more important, that it was the only way in which the allegedly inferior Negro Race could be kept in subordination.⁴²

Stampp shares this view in his own evaluation of the problem:

The proslavery writer's favorite explanation for the survival of an allegedly unprofitable labor system was that Negroes were unfit for freedom. Slavery existed because of the "race problem"---because the presence of a horde of free Negroes would pose an immense social danger and threaten southern civilization. Slavery was, above all, a method of regulating race relations, an instrument of social control. The master kept possession of his slaves from a sense of duty to society and to his "people." To destroy the system, according to the pro-slavery argument, would be a tragedy for both races.⁴³

Southern historian Simkins concurs with the argument:

⁴¹ James Ford Rhodes, "Slavery as a Single Cause," Lectures on the American Civil War (New York: Macmillan Co., 1930), 3.

⁴² Randall and Donald, 21.

⁴³ Stampp, 387.

It must be remembered that an agricultural system is often more than a mere economic pursuit, to be abandoned as soon as losses become obvious. It may be a way of life, a social system surrounded by so much tradition that it would not be abandoned except in the face of a superior outside force. This was emphatically true of the agricultural system of the South before 1865. Slavery was close to the heart of the peculiar social practices of the Old South....The many Southerners who had no direct material interest in its continuation and the few Southerners who, like Robert E. Lee, continued to disapprove of it, dared offer no alternative, for slavery was believed to be a social necessity for keeping the Negro "in his place."⁴⁴

Avery Craven sees the same attitude as he analyzes the position of the South on the Negro. He suggests that the South believed that the Negro was "helpless" without the benevolent institution of slavery to guide him. He would not work unless he was forced to do so.⁴⁵ Further Craven Notes:

Indolence benumbed his "feeble intellect...and inflamed his vile passions" and drove him "into the extremes of savage barbarism." Without slavery he would sink into poverty and want, into vice and plunder, into disease and death.

Slavery thus made him into a useful member of society and rewarded him with a bit of civilization Christianity. There were twice as many Negro church members in the South as had been won to Christ by all "other missionary efforts" combined.⁴⁶

And Finally, Allan Nevins makes the following comments:

And most fortifying of all to the Southern spirit, they could consciously or unconsciously take the view that the Negro had never been fit for any position but that of bondsman, and never would be. This became a traditional conviction bulwarked by habit, indolence, timidity, and the desire for security.

The assertion that the Negro was an inferior creation, a

⁴⁴Simkins, 132.

⁴⁵Avery O. Craven, The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861, A History of the South (Louisiana State University Press: Littlefield Fund for Southern History of the University of Texas, 1953), VI, 258, 259.

⁴⁶Ibid.

being of natural incapacity, lent itself to a thought-pattern which opposed all change in slavery.⁴⁷

Slavery was a cultural adaptation and the people liked it. The fact that there was not scientific, reasonable basis for such a belief in the inferiority of the Negro did not interfere with the Southern social concept. It had simply become their way of life. Obviously it is impossible to make valid generalizations about any race with respect to inferior or superior traits. It would be ridiculous to regard Negroes as any more fitted or destined to spend their lives as slaves than the white race. Since the white race has been obliged to submit to various forms of bondage over the centuries, it would seem ridiculous to automatically place the Negro race in a niche of servitude forever.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Southerners became fervent defenders of a beneficent system justified on historical, biblical, scientific, economic, and sociological grounds. Supposedly learned men set out to prove the innate inferiority of the Negro race. Dr. Josiah Nott, of Mobile, Alabama tried to show that the Negro belonged to a different species from the white man. Dr. J. H. Van Evrie demonstrated the application of the principle in his book Negroes and Negro "Slavery"; The First an Inferior Race: The Latter its Normal Condition. Albert Gallatin Brown, of Mississippi, did not hesitate to inform the United States Senate that "slavery is a great moral, social, and political blessing—a blessing to the slave, and a blessing to the master."⁴⁹ Stanley

⁴⁷ Nevins, 534.

⁴⁸ Stampp, 10.

⁴⁹ Randall and Donald, 48.

Elkins makes a timely summation:

The man of reason and good will in the Jeffersonian and immediate post Jeffersonian South tried again and again to balance within himself two conflicting sets of feelings about slavery. On the one hand was the sentiment, widely shared at the end of the eighteenth century, that the institution was uneconomic, morally dubious, and a burden on both the slaveholder and the community. That the Negro, on the other hand, lacked the capacity to care for himself as a free American was a conviction that slavery's strongest opponents, not excluding Thomas Jefferson, could seldom escape.⁵⁰

Used often as an argument for the beneficent nature of the system was the one that Negroes were actually happier in slavery. Thoughts of freedom were only placed in their minds by Northern abolitionists and troublemakers, it was believed. Actually, the facts indicate otherwise. The custom among many slaveholders was to place a clause in their wills freeing their slaves under prescribed conditions. Stamp's study of the practice reveals the following:

With rare exceptions slaves eagerly accepted offers of emancipation regardless of the conditions imposed on them. In some cases they were required to leave not merely the state but the country. One Virginia master offered freedom to his fourteen slaves if they would agree to move to Liberia at the expense of the American Colonization Society. Though they were thus forced to part with friends and relatives and to settle in a strange land, only one of them rejected the terms. All of the one hundred and twenty-three slaves of Isaac Ross, of Mississippi, elected the option of being transported to Africa to obtain the freedom provided in his will.⁵¹

It is a little known fact that many Negroes really wanted their freedom and would go to such great expense and sacrifice to obtain it. This in itself seems a profound contradiction to the argument that Negroes were destined to be slaves. It seems strange

⁵⁰ Elkins, 207.

⁵¹ Stamp, 94.

that a race of people who were perfectly adapted and destined to remain in bonds would fight it with such fortitude and determination. According to Sydnor, the slaveholder did not give the abolitionist a fair hearing:

His traditions, his economic interests, and his way of life all fought against his considering slavery in a detached, objective fashion; and his dealings with the North for some years past had destroyed any faith ⁵² he may have had in Northern disinterestedness and fair dealing.

Regardless of the arguments used to justify the system, the motivation to retain it was strong. And that motivation was clearly social in nature. Southerners used historical, biblical, scientific, economic, and sociological grounds to try to prove that slavery was good, and that it was necessary. They used every method of reasoning available, but the real motivating factor was the fear that the Negro might become socially equal. And whether they sincerely believed that he was innately inferior or not seems relatively unimportant; what is important is that the Southerners were determined he would remain in subordination. Tradition ruled the South and had established an entrenched institution. The plasticity which may have once characterized the Southern mind had gone. They were accustomed to their way of life and were determined to fight for it if necessary. Clearly social fears and traditions dominated their thinking at a crucial time. Stampg cogently sums up the problem:

By the eighteenth century color had become not only the evidence of slavery but also a badge of degradation. Thus the master class, for its own purposes, wrote chattel slavery, the caste system, and color prejudice into American custom and law. ⁵³

⁵² Sydnor, 241.

⁵³ Stampg, 23.

Slavery was a way of life to the South; it was a method of keeping the Negro in subordination to the slaveholder. To the Negro it was believed to be a moral and spiritual blessing. It is significant that these same attitudes governing slavery played a role in the institution as it existed further West in Utah. Those who migrated to Utah and settled there came with mixed backgrounds and ideas on the problem of slavery. The degree to which it became a part of their lives is a matter well worth consideration.

CHAPTER II

NATURE OF NEGRO SLAVERY IN UTAH

Clearly written upon the bronze tablet on the north side of the Brigham Young Monument at the intersection of Main and South Temple Streets in Salt Lake City are these names: "Green Flake, Hark Lay, and Oscar Crosby, Colored Servants." An unknown fact to many Utahns, this plaque honoring the original pioneers of 1847 also pays tribute to three Negro slaves who were included in the group. The most famous of the Utah slaves, these were the first to enter the Utah Territory. Oddly enough, Utah in 1850 was the only Western territory in which Negroes were held as slaves.¹

Andrew Jensen, formerly Assistant Historian for the L.D.S. Church, records the following information:

Green Flake was born January 1825, as a slave in Anson County, North Carolina, on the plantation of James M. Flake's father, and spent all of his early life in that family; he went with the Flake family to Nauvoo, Illinois, and thence West during the "Mormon" exodus of 1846. Green Flake's permanent home was Union, Salt Lake County, Utah; but he lived temporarily in Salt Lake City after the fall of 1893; later he moved to Idaho and died at Idaho Falls, October 20, 1903.²

Green Flake was one of many slaves on a large plantation in North Carolina belonging to Jordon Flake; when Flake passed away he

¹James B. Christensen, "A Social Survey of the Negro Population of Salt Lake City, Utah," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 1948), 11.

²Andrew Jensen, L.D.S. Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City, Utah: Arrow Press, 1920), IV, 703.

divided up his property among his family as is stated in his will:

I, Jordon Flake of the State of North Carolina and County of Anson, being weak in body though sound of mind and memory, thanks be to God for the same and calling to mind the mortality of my body and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die, therefore, I do make this my last will and testament in the following manner and form:

First: I give and bequeath to my son John M. Flake the three Negro boys that he has in possession, namely, Ned, Daniel, and Isham and two hundred dollars...Fourth: I give to my son James₃ M. Flake, two Negroes Green and Lyse and three hundred dollars.

James M. Flake was baptized into the Mormon Church in the winter of 1843-44 in Mississippi. Following a trip to Nauvoo, Illinois in the spring of 1844, the family decided they wanted to live with the "Saints." With three other families and three Negro slaves, the Flakes made the move.⁴ O. D. Flake, a grandson of James M. Flake, continues the account:

When Brigham Young commenced fitting out a train to take the first of the pioneers across the Great Plains, he needed the very best teams and outfits to be had. James M. Flake, who had put his all upon the altar, sent his slave, Green with the mules and mountain carriage, to help the company to their destination. He told Green to send the outfit back by some of the brethren, who would be returning, and for him to stay and build them a house. Like the old slaves, he faithfully carried out his instructions.⁵

The fact that he was a Negro slave did not prevent Green Flake from being baptized into the Church. The Southern pioneer John Brown tells of this in his diary when he says that "I also baptized two

³Will of Jordon Flake, From film of North Carolina Wills, Anson County, North Carolina, 1751-1942, Call No. F NC 2c(4575)Part 3, p. 164.

⁴✓ O. D. Flake, William J. Flake, Pioneer-Colonizer (Salt Lake City, Utah: by the author, 1948), 3.

⁵Ibid. 9.

black men, Allen and Green, belonging to Brother Flake."⁶ Brown's record is a distinct indication that slaves were in many cases members of the Mormon Church.

Traveling with the Amasa M. Lyman and Willard Richards Companies, James M. Flake and his family came West in 1848. Flake was appointed captain of 100 wagons, most of these being made up of Southern families. The company consisted of the following:

502 white people	63 pigs
24 Negroes	5 cats
169 wagons	44 dogs
50 horses	170 chickens
20 mules	4 turkeys
515 oxen	5 doves, ⁷
426 loose cattle	3 goats
369 sheep	

Since no mention is made in the above listing of the specific condition of the twenty-four Negroes included, it is impossible to determine whether they were slave or free. But it is highly probable that they were of slave status.

William J. Flake, son of James M. Flake, tells of his father being killed in an accident with a mule after leaving for California in 1849. In 1854, his mother and family went with C. C. Rich and A. M. Lyman to San Bernardino. Before leaving, she gave her "Negro slave Green Flake to the Church as tithing. He then worked two years for President Young and Heber C. Kimball, and then got his liberty and

⁶ John Brown, Autobiography of John Brown, 1820-1896, arranged and published by John Zimmerman Brown (Salt Lake City, Utah: Stevens and Wallis Press, 1941), 46.

⁷ Flake, 10, 11.

settled near Union."⁸ Years later, in 1897, The Deseret News reported:

Two pioneers called at the News office today; one was a colored man named Green Flake, who claims to have been in the first wagon through Emigration Canyon, and moved to Idaho after living in Utah 49 years. He is now 70 years of age.

Acting as another witness of Green Flake, as well as the other two original Negro pioneers, Amasa M. Lyman Jr. himself a son of one of the original pioneers, issued the following statement in 1936:

I knew all three of those Negro servants who were members of President Brigham Young's Pioneer Company of 1847. Hark Lay belonged to William Lay. Hark was always hard to manage. He died in California. William Crosby also went to California and took his servant Oscar Crosby along with him, where the latter died. After the slaves were freed, Green Flake lived at Union Fort, Salt Lake County.¹⁰

According to Mr. Lyman, some of the Utah slaveholders and their respective Negro slaves were those listed here:¹¹

SLAVE OWNERS:

Daniel M. Thomas
William Matthews
William Lay
William Crosby
James M. Flake

William Smith

NEGRO SLAVES:

Toby
Uncle Phil
Hark, Henderson, and Knelt
Oscar and Grief
Green and his wife "Liz"
(later known as Mrs. Martha
Green Flake)
Aunt "_____", Hanna, and
Lawrence

⁸ William J. Flake, Letter to L. D. S. Church Historian, Feb. 14, 1894. M.S. in Church Archives, Flake File in Salt Lake City.

⁹ Deseret News, July 19, 1897.

¹⁰ Brown, 73.

¹¹ Interview with Amasa M. Lyman, Jr., quoted in Jack Beller, "Negro Slaves in Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, IF (October 1929), 123, 124.

John H. Bankhead
 John Brown
 Jasper N. Perkins
 Reuben Perkins

Monroe Perkins
 Heber C. Kimball

Mr. Sprouse
 Charles C. Rich

Mrs. Sina Bankhead
 Betsy Crosby Brown Flewellen¹²
 Mary Perkins¹³
 Frank, wife Esther, Ben and other
 children
 Ben
 Martha (later married to Green
 Flake)
 Daniel
 3 pair of slaves

It was a customary practice for the slaves to assume the surname of their masters. Therefore, where a surname is not found, it is the same name as that of the master.

Obviously, the Mormon exodus to the West in 1847 included Southerners who had been accustomed to slavery from a cultural standpoint. One of these was John Brown, a native of Tennessee, who was converted to the Mormon Church and sent on a mission to the Southern States in 1843. Brown recorded in his journal that in April 1846, he assisted in organizing a company of fourteen families in Mississippi and then headed for the Rocky Mountains. Upon learning that Brigham Young was still at Winter Quarters, Brown returned to Mississippi for his family. His journal, arranged by his son, John Zimmerman Brown, yields considerable light on the existence of slavery in the company:

After a few days rest, we commenced to wind up our business and prepare to leave in the spring for Council Bluffs, to go out with the Church, when unexpectedly, in came two elders right from the Bluffs, viz: Bryant Nowlin and Charles Crimson, with an epistle from the Council of the Twelve, instructing us to remain another year, to fit

¹²Brown, 146.

¹³Frank Esshom, Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Pioneers Book Publishing Co., 1913), 958.

out and send all the men we could, to go as pioneers. We called a council to consider the matter. We concluded to send some six pioneers, one of whom was to take charge of the whole, being mostly black servants. It fell to my lot to go and superintend the affair, William Crosby to send one hand, John Bankhead one, William Lay one, and John Powell one, his brother David; and I was to take one besides myself. We had to travel to the Bluffs in the winter in order to get there in time.¹⁴

Brown then tells of the tremendous hardship which the trip entailed and the effects it had upon the company:

We purchased our wagons and teams, etc. at St. Louis. A few days' travel from this point, Brothers James Stratton and Nowlin overtook us, also Brother Matthew Ivory. Brother Stratton had his family along. They had one wagon. The mud was so bad we were obliged to lay by several days. We now had six wagons. It finally turned cold and we had a very severe time of it. The Negroes suffered most. My boy, whose name was Henry, took cold and finally the Winter Fever (Lobar Pneumonia) set in which caused his death on the road. I buried him in Andrew County, at the lower end of the round prairies eight miles north of Savannah, Missouri. In this neighborhood, we purchased some more cattle.

We reached the Bluffs a few days before the pioneers started and while I was lying there, Bankhead's Negro died with the Winter Fever. It was the severest trip I had undertaken. I left one wagon and load with Brother Crismon to bring out with the families. I took the other two wagons, the two black boys that survived the trip (Oscar Crosby and Hark Lay), David Powell and Matthew Ivory, and joined the pioneer camp.¹⁵

The effects of the hard winter apparently took heavy toll upon the Negro members of the group. Oscar Crosby and Hark Lay, however, survived to become, with Green Flake, the first Negro pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley. From this journal, it is evident that many of the Southern members of the Church were slaveholders because of their cultural background, and that these slaveholding

¹⁴Brown, 71.

¹⁵Ibid. 72.

privileges were in no way endangered by their membership in the Church.

In enumerating the specific make-up of the Mississippi Company, John Brown makes the following interesting entry:¹⁶

Saturday, May 27, 1848, I made a report of the Mississippi Company as follows:

Heads of Families	White Persons	Colored Persons
John Powell	6	
Moses Powell	4	
Robert M. Smith	9	10
John Lockhart	7	
George Bankhead		
John H. Bankhead	6	11
John D. Holladay	1	
Francis McKnown	10	2
William H. Lay	6	2
Elizabeth Crosby	1	3
John Brown	2	1
William Crosby	3	5
Ekles Truly	1	
Totals:	56	34

In 1848 seven of the thirteen Southern members of the Church were active slaveholders, and the proportion of colored persons to white persons was comparatively great. One of the slaves included in this group was Betsy Crosby Brown Flewellen, the colored servant of Elizabeth Crosby Brown. As a little girl she was brought from the Crosby plantation in Monroe County, Mississippi to Utah by Mrs. Brown in 1848. She was a servant or a slave in the Brown home from 1848 until the slaves were freed after the Civil War. She later married a colored man, a barber named Flewellen, in Salt Lake City.¹⁷ Other

¹⁶Ibid. 96.

¹⁷Ibid. 145.

records also support the existence of Southern masters with their Negro slaves; the Journal History of the L.D.S. Church contains this brief entry: "The last company of emigrants to leave Winter Quarters, (July 15, 1848), had some Southerners with their colored attendants."¹⁸

In connection with some later Mississippi converts to the Church, an Iowa historian tells of an interesting event. Although the people of Tabor, Iowa, disapproved of theft and violence as a means of giving slaves their freedom, the town was nevertheless widely known as an Underground Railroad Station. Many events demonstrating their desire to free slaves have been recorded in the history of Iowa. At least one of these episodes had direct connection with some Mormon pioneers:

On the evening of July 4, 1854, a Mormon elder with his family and six slaves camped overnight in Tabor on their way from Mississippi to Salt Lake City. Two of the Negroes got water from a well, near which the first hotel was in the process of erection. The carpenters learned that five of the six colored people, a father, mother, two children, and another man, were anxious to escape bondage. The other slave woman did not wish to leave her master so was not informed of their plans. In the night S. H. Adams, John Hallam and James K. Gaston took the five Negroes east of town across the Nishnabotna River and concealed them in the bushes.¹⁹

Discovering the next morning that the camp duties were unperformed, the teams uncared for, and no breakfast prepared, the slaveowner soon discovered that his slaves had disappeared. He promptly enlisted help from some pro-slavery sympathizers a few miles south of Tabor, and executed a man hunt into the groves and thickets along

¹⁸ Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, July 15, 1848 (From Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, Utah).

¹⁹ Catherine Grace Barbour Farquhar, "Tabor and Tabor College," Iowa Journal of History and Politics (October 1943), 358.

the Nishnabotna River:

But one of the searchers, at heart a friend of the refugees, was careful to do the searching in the area where he knew they were concealed and just as careful not to find them. In a day or two Cephas Case and W. L. Clark conducted the fugitives to a Quacker settlement near Des Moines, from which place they eventually found their way to Canada.²⁰

These slaves were held against their will and were considered to be servants in bondage. When considered with John Brown's account, this Iowa incident suggests that slavery among these Mormons at least was slavery in the true sense of the word.

It will be the concern of this chapter to consider as many of the individual slaves and slaveholders as are known. John Bankhead and family brought a number of slaves with them from the South, and these slaves remained with the family after their emancipation as free persons of color until Mr. Bankhead died in 1884. John Bankhead lived in Draper, Utah. One of the well-known slaves he brought with him to Draper was Nathan Bankhead. Mrs. Sina Bankhead of Salt Lake County says that her father-in-law was Nathan Bankhead.²¹ Included in the eleven Bankhead Negro slaves who came into the valley in 1848, were Nathan, his wife Susan, Dan, George, Alex, Sam, Lewis, Ike, John, Nancy, and Rose. When the slaves were freed at the conclusion of the Civil War, Bankhead encouraged each of them to be self-sufficient. He had originally owned his slaves on his plantation in Tennessee and brought them to Utah when converted to the Mormon Church. Bankhead apparently exercised a considerable

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Beller, 124.

amount of kindness to his slaves.²²

Vilate Crosby, a Negro slave and mother-in-law to Green Flake, came to Utah from Mississippi with the Crosbys in September 1848 in the Heber C. Kimball Company. She had two daughters and was also the mother of Hark Lay, one of the original Negro pioneers of 1847.

Martha, one of her daughters, became the wife of Green Flake. The other daughter, Rose, became the wife of Miles Litzford and the mother of Dan Freeman, who was the first free born Negro in Utah, in 1850.²³

From Jasper N. Perkins of Salt Lake City, a nephew of Monroe Perkins, and Mrs. Esther Jane Leggroan (colored) of Salt Lake County, daughter of Mary Perkins, one of the Perkins slaves, the following information is derived: Reuben Perkins came to Utah October 18, 1848 with the Andrew Perkins Company, from North Carolina and settled in Bountiful, Utah. He brought several Negro slaves with him. Monroe Perkins owned another slave named Ben, whom he sold to a man named Sprouse, a Southerner. While returning to the South with Sprouse, Ben escaped into the mountains near Denver, and returned to Utah.²⁴

Through an interview with Samuel Chambers and his son, Peter Chambers, both of whom came to Utah in 1870, Jack Beller learned the following: Martha, who later became the wife of Green

²² Interview with Lucille Perkins Bankhead, Great Granddaughter of Green Flake, Salt Lake City, Utah, Feb. 25, 1966.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Beller, 125.

Flake, was brought to Utah by Heber C. Kimball in 1848. Daniel Sprouse, a Negro slave, was brought to Utah by his master Sprouse from Texas in the 1850's.²⁵

There were evidently some Negro slaves among the group who settled in Spanish Fork, Utah:

John J. Redd, a pioneer of Spanish Fork, Utah, in 1850 located there and being the owner of some Negro slaves, which he had brought with him from his home in North Carolina, used them in his farming operations.²⁶

Very little more is known of the Spanish Fork slaves, except that they existed. Attorney Benjamin Rich of Salt Lake City, said that Grandfather Charles C. Rich owned three pair of slaves who were liberated in California when Rich went there in 1851. Charles C. Rich was a native of Kentucky and arrived in Salt Lake City on October 3, 1847.²⁷ In support of Benjamin Rich's claim, the following is taken from Charles C. Rich's journal, which recorded a journey from Great Salt Lake City to San Bernardino, on Thursday, May 10, 1855:

In company with Brother George Cannon and wife, Elders Jos. Bull, Matthew T. Wilkie, my son Joseph, David Fairbanks, Henry Clark, Alfred Bennett, Robert Matthews, Charles Davis, and my Negro "Dick" started for San Bernardino, and traveled 80 miles that day...²⁸

Although of limited scholarly value because of lack of documen-

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Elisha Warner, History of Spanish Fork (Salt Lake City, Utah: by the author, 1930), 9.

²⁷ Beller, 125.

²⁸ Charles C. Rich's Journal, Thursday, May 10, 1855. (From Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, Utah).

tation, Kate B. Carter's Negro Pioneer includes interesting snatches of information pertaining to some of the slaves. One of these is taken from Mary Lee Bland Ewell's personal history in which she tells of her appreciation for a Negro slave called Mammy Chloe. Mammy Chloe seems to have emerged from the well founded traditions of the Old South and belonged to the Bland family of Cumberland County, Kentucky. She became very attached to the daughter Mary Lee, and eventually left Kentucky to follow Mary Lee when the young girl fell in love with a young Mormon named William Ewell. Mary Lee wanted to go with her husband to Utah, and Mammy Chloe aided her to escape from the Bland home. Mammy Chloe became a convert to the Church and stood by the family for the rest of her years. Mary Lee comments in her history about her slave:

Even after the slaves were freed by President Lincoln, she did not desire her freedom. No one ever knew her grief leaving her son Sammy, but being slaves, both learned never to complain at separation. I am sure I can never know what her great devotion to "Miss. Mary Lee," as she always called me, cost²⁹ her and how she softened my hardships whenever she could.

This account suggests that the "Negro Mammies" left a cultural imprint upon the Utah scene reminiscent of the Southern stereotype. Reading like an episode from Gone With The Wind, Mrs. Ewell's account strongly resembles the romantic Southern tradition.

Another personal history used by Mrs. Carter is that of Williams Washington Camp, who was converted to the Mormon Church in Tennessee. The Camps had a slave called Charlotte who tended

²⁹✓ Mary Lee Bland Ewell, Personal History, recorded in DUP files, quoted in Kate B. Carter, The Negro Pioneer (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Printing Company for Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1965), 36.

children and did housekeeping; they also had three other slaves called Dan, Ike, and Ben who were included in the group who came with the family to Utah. In 1855, Williams' daughter Ellen married Thomas Greer and they were later called on a mission for the Church to Texas. Mr. Camp gave them two Negro slaves, Ike and Caroline, as gifts, and the Greers apparently took the Negroes with them to Texas.³⁰ The Journal History of the L.D.S. Church includes a small item which may have related to the incident:

June 16, 1856, President Brigham Young returned to Feramorz Little's where he had an interview with Brothers Jesse Little and Robert Burton about Brother Camp taking away his Negroes.³¹

William Taylor Dennis was also a convert to the Church from the South, and came to Utah in 1855. He settled in Salem, Utah with his family and the following slaves: Nancy or Mammy Dennis, Jim Valentine, his wife, and their son Jim. Mr. Dennis freed his slaves when he heard of the Emancipation Proclamation, but Mammy Dennis refused her freedom.³² Evidently there were numerous cases of converts to the Mormon Church migrating to Utah in company with their slaves.

In the diary of Hosea Stout there is verification that William H. Hooper, T. S. Williams, and J. H. Johnson owned Negro slaves. Williams was a merchant and lawyer and he employed William Hooper.

³⁰ Williams Washington Camp, Personal History recorded in DUP files, quoted in The Negro Pioneer, 39-41.

³¹ Journal History...June 16, 1856.

³² From files of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, quoted in The Negro Pioneer, 48.

Stout sheds light on these slaves:

Thursday, 21 April 1859. Suit before Jeter Clinton, Esq.:

"The people and C. vs. Tom Coulbourn, negro slave belonging to J. H. Johnson on examination for shooting Shep negro slave belonging to W. H. Hooper." The negroes had got into a row about two wenches belonging to T. S. Williams and love and jealousy was the main cause of the fuss. Like their masters under such circumstances would probably do, they went to shooting each other. Shep is badly wounded and his life is precarious. Dist. Attorney Wilson prosecuted and Blair and myself defended. Tom was³³ held to bail for \$1000 to appear at the next Dist. Court.

Evidence that non-Mormons were slaveholders too is found in reference to Judge W. W. Drummond, a man of questionable character. Records indicate that Judge Drummond probably owned at least one slave:

Some little excitement prevails in town today. An affair took place between Judge Drummond and a Jew trader here, which was rather amusing at the time, but may be something more than fun for the Judge before he gets through with it. A grand jury is meeting this evening, which will bring in an indictment against the Judge and his negro, Cato, for assault and battery with intent to murder; and he will be arrested and brought before the probate court on monday next, at 9 o'clock, just at the time he should answer to his name in Supreme Court, which sits at that hour.³⁴

Regarding the existence of slavery in Utah, two officials of the L.D.S. Church made some interesting observations. John Taylor and N. H. Felt went to New York to establish a paper to explain the doctrines of the Church and to defend the Saints in Utah. While in Chicago, they were interviewed by a Chicago paper and the account was recorded in the Millennial Star:

³³ Hosea Stout, On the Mormon Frontier: Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861, ed. by Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1964), II, 695.

³⁴ Millennial Star (Saturday, Jan. 5, 1856).

As respects slavery in the Territory, we were assured there was but little of it there, yet it is there. Some slaves had been liberated by their owners since they were taken to Utah; others still remain slaves. But the most of those who take slaves there pass over with them in a little while to San Bernardino, a Mormon settlement in California, some seven hundred or eight hundred miles from Salt Lake City. How many slaves are now held there they could not say, but the number relatively was by no means small. A single person had taken between forty and fifty, and many had gone in with smaller numbers.³⁵

Evidently, the number suggested here is somewhat exaggerated; according to the United States Census, there were twenty-four free persons of color and twenty-six Negro slaves in Utah in 1850.³⁶ The slaves were reported to be en route to California, but it is clear that many stayed in the valley. Because of insufficient records, it is impossible to verify the number of colored persons in Utah with the 1850 census. There is no way of finding the number of those who merely passed through Utah on their way to California, or of those who died on the way. A few of the slave owners went with Amasa M. Lyman to San Bernardino, California in 1851, to establish a Mormon colony. Charles C. Rich, William Matthews, Daniel M. Thomas, William Crosby, and William Smith were included in this group. Since California was then free soil, their slaves were liberated upon arrival there. Mr. Lyman, Jr. relates that when William Smith discovered that his slaves would become free in California, he tried to take them to Texas, but his slaves desired freedom and refused to go with him.³⁷

Regardless of any general attitude existing in Utah toward

³⁵ Ibid. (Jan. 25, 1855), 63.

³⁶ U.S., Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, 993.

³⁷ Beller, 126.

slavery, slaves were nevertheless held against their will. Logically speaking, slaves in Utah were desirous of freedom also, but since Utah was open to slavery after 1850, they could be legally held and controlled. California was a free state, while Utah operated as a slave state under the provisions of the Compromise of 1850. Utah and New Mexico were left open to the slavery controversy under the terms of that agreement.³⁸

It is clear, however, that all the slaves brought into the territory did not continue to California. According to the Census of 1860, there were thirty free colored persons and twenty-nine slaves in Utah. Of this number, eighteen were males and eleven were females; ten resided in Davis County and nineteen in Salt Lake County.³⁹

Of major interest in any consideration of Negro slavery are the laws governing its existence. In 1851, the Utah Territorial Legislature passed a significant act regarding slavery:

Sec. 1. Be it enacted by the Governor and Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah: That any person or persons coming to this territory, and bringing with them servants justly bound to them arising from special contract or otherwise, said person or persons shall be entitled to such service or labor by the laws of this territory...⁴⁰

While slavery was accepted by law, the legislature apparently

³⁸ "Slavery in the United States," Encyclopedia Americana, XXVII, 396.

³⁹ U.S., Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States: 1860, 135.

⁴⁰ "Act in Relation to Service," Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah (Great Salt Lake City, Utah, 1855), 160.

thought also that provisions for humane treatment should be endorsed. Desire to prevent inter-racial marriage may also have been a motivating factor. This "Act in Relation to Service" continues:

Sec. 4. That if any master or mistress shall have sexual or carnal intercourse with his or her servant or servants of the African race, he or she shall forfeit all claim to said servant or servants to the commonwealth; and if any white person shall be guilty of sexual intercourse with any of the African race, they shall be subject, on conviction thereof to a fine of not exceeding one thousand dollars, nor less than five hundred, to the use of the territory, and imprisonment, not exceeding three years.

Sec. 5. It shall be the duty of masters or mistresses, to provide for his, her, or their servants comfortable habitations, clothing, bedding, sufficient food, and recreation. And it shall be the duty of the servant in return therefor, to labor faithfully all reasonable hours, and do such service with fidelity as may be required by his, or her master or mistress.

Sec. 6. It shall be the duty of the master to correct and punish his servant in a reasonable manner when it may be necessary, being guided by prudence and humanity; and if he shall be guilty of cruelty or abuse, or neglect to feed, clothe, or shelter his servants in a proper manner, the Probate Court may declare the contract between master and servant or servants void, according to the provisions of the fourth section of this act.⁴¹

This interesting piece of legislation clearly demonstrates that the institution of slavery was accepted as the normal way of life. Laws were clearly defined for both master and slave to obey, somewhat resembling the system of the South. And if any slave were to decide not to obey such laws, the territory would force him to do so under the court system. The right of a slave owner to hold his slave as legal property was upheld in the Probate Court, according to the account of Hosea Stout:

⁴¹Ibid. 161.

Wednesday 18 June 1856. Law suit before probate on an examination People vs. William Camp et. al. for kidnapping a Negro Dan. The case commenced Monday evening and lasted yesterday & today till noon.

It appears that Camp was the owner of Dan who had ran away and C. had went with three others to bring him back. The court acquitted them Carrington Atty. Genl. for the people and Mr. T. S. Williams & self for defts. There was great excitement on the occasion The question naturally involving more or less the slavery question and I was surprised to see those latent feelings aroused in our midst which are making so much disturbance in the states.⁴²

Not only did the court acquit the owner, but evidently there were "latent feelings" about the slavery issue aroused among the people. As to the nature of the feelings, Stout does not elaborate, but it would seem that the people were upset about the interference with property which had occurred. An incident of this kind is comparable to the cultural tie slavery had to the South.

An indication of the value of a Negro slave is given in John Brown's journal. An "African Slave Girl" was apparently of considerable worth:⁴³

On the 8th of January 1857, I consecrated and deeded to the Church the following:

Property and Improvements of real estate.....	\$775.00
Cattle, Wagon and Pigs.....	\$541.00
Farming Tools and Rifle.....	\$105.00
Household Furniture, Bedding, etc.....	\$150.00
Twelve Sheep and two pistols.....	\$ 72.00
Silver Watch and Cooking Stove.....	\$ 55.00
Sixty Bushels Wheat.....	\$120.00
Corn, Vegetables, etc.....	\$145.00
Sundries.....	\$ 75.00
African Servant Girl.....	\$1000.00
	\$3,038.00

A more interesting indication of the worth of slaves,

⁴² Stout, II. 597.

⁴³ Brown, 144.

however, is related in the sales transactions that were carried on in the valley. One such bill of sale was recorded in the County of Great Salt Lake in 1859:⁴⁴

Know all men by these presents. That I, Thomas S. Williams of Great Salt Lake City in the Territory of Utah, for and in consideration of the sum of eight hundred dollars, to me in hand, paid at and before the ensealing and delivery of these presents, by William H. Hooper of the city and territory afore-said, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have bargained and sold and by these presents, do grant bargain and sell and convey unto the said Wm. H. Hooper, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, one negro boy "Dan"; the said negro boy is twenty-six years of age, was born the property and slave of Williams Camp on the 15th day of October A.D. 1833, in the town of Dresden, Weakley County, State of Tennessee; and by the said Williams Camp was sold to me in the year 1858, a bill of sale having been executed to me by the said Williams Camp for the said Negro boy "Dan", to have and to hold the said negro boy "Dan" unto the said Wm. H. Hooper, his executors, administrators and assigns, against all and every person and persons whomsoever.

Attest---

A. R. Jackman
Charles Evans
Great Salt Lake City
Sept. 7th, 1859

T. S. Williams
Recorded September 8th,
1859
F. B. Woolley, Recorder

This interesting document, which is on file in the Salt Lake County Recorder's Office, certainly bears out the existence of the slave trade in the valley. This also serves as another witness of Williams Camp's ownership of the slave "Dan". The Salt Lake Tribune, in reporting the discovery of this document, made the following observations:

Although the slave trade never was legal in Utah, the fact that dealing in human bondage took place in the past has been discovered in time-worn documents in the County Recorder's Office. Patrick J. Sullivan, an employee of a Salt Lake Abstract firm, while searching the records for real estate information,

⁴⁴ M.S. on file in the Salt Lake County Recorder's Office.

came across the copy of a bill of sale for a Negro boy named Dan in a book containing transactions for the year 1859. The slave was sold by Thomas S. Williams of Great Salt Lake City to William H. Hooper, same address, for \$800.⁴⁵

As to the legality of the slave trade, this writer was sadly misinformed. But the article demonstrates the serious lack of information on the practice of slavery in Utah on the part of even journalists of the 1930's. The writer conveys sincere amazement at the existence of such transactions in Utah.

It is obvious then from the evidence considered in this chapter that slavery did exist in the Utah territory; that it was in fact a legal and accepted institution, and that members of the Mormon Church were the chief slave owners. From the standpoint of its legality and binding nature, it was accepted as an institution in Utah on a basis similar to that of the South. Interestingly enough, it is also evident that there was no attempt to rid the territory of the practice of slavery. Those who owned slaves thought their value to be high enough that they should be brought from the South, and utilized in a new home in the Mountains. Some were disappointed at the loss of their slaves along the way and in California. Others managed to retain the services of their slaves for several years in the valley. As a rule, however, the slaves seemed to desire their freedom and seized upon any opportunity. And there were the few who preferred to remain with the master and the life to which they had become accustomed. Most slave owners were from the South, and most were also members of the Mormon Church.

⁴⁵ Salt Lake Tribune, May 31, 1939, 22.

CHAPTER III

MORMON ATTITUDES TOWARD NEGRO SLAVERY

In 1851, Orson Hyde qualified the stand of the Mormon Church in relation to the subject of slavery. It had become a major issue all over the country, and as the controversy grew a stand seemed to become necessary:

We feel it to be our duty to define our position in relation to the subject of slavery. There are several men in the valley of the Salt Lake from the Southern States who have slaves with them. There is no law in Utah to authorize slavery, neither any to prohibit it. If the slave is disposed to leave his master, no power exists there, either legal or moral, that will prevent him. But if the slave chooses to remain with his master, none are allowed to interfere between the master and the slave. All the slaves that are there appear to be perfectly contented and satisfied.

When a man in the Southern States embraces our faith, and is the owner of slaves, the Church says to him, if your slaves wish to remain with you, and to go with you, put them not away; but if they choose to leave you, or are not satisfied to remain with you, it is for you to sell them, or to let them go free, as your own conscience may direct. The laws of the land recognize slavery, and we do not wish to oppose the laws of the country. If there is sin in selling a slave, let the individual who sells him bear that sin, and not the Church. Wisdom and prudence dictate to us this position, and we trust that our position will henceforth be understood.¹

From the time the Church was organized in 1830 until this declaration was made in 1851, there had been no official stand by the Church on the issue of slavery. Hyde made it clear through

¹Orson Hyde, "Slavery Among the Saints," Millennial Star, XIII (February 15, 1851), 63.

this article that the Church had no particular quarrel with slavery, and would not interfere with any member who owned such property. His reference to a lack of law on the matter is interesting; the "Act in Relation to Service" passed by the Territorial Legislature which was referred to in the previous chapter, was enacted just seven months after his statement. It seems as though the legislature did not hesitate to investigate the lack of law on the issue. At any rate, the Church had indicated a stand. Ironically enough, in Jackson County, Missouri, the Church was believed to be of an abolitionist temperament. One need only refer to an advertisement of the day to understand the importance of the system of chattel slavery to Missourians:

State of Missouri, County of Pike, S.S.

To whom it may concern:

The undersigned will, on tuesday, Sept. 29, 1846, sell at public outcry on the premises where old Coon Creek crosses Mission Ridge, the following chattels, to wit:

Six yoke of oxen with yoke and chains; three bedsteads with beds: three nigger wenches: four nigger bucks: three nigger boys: four nigger girls: two prairie plows: one barrel of pickled cabbage: one lot of nigger hoses: one hogshead of tobacco: one spinning wheel: one loom: 23 fox hounds, all well trained: a lot of coon, mink and skunk hides: a lot of other articles.

Terms of sale will be made on day of sale. Am going to California.

Signed, John Montgomery

Jim Lone, Crier

Free head of cheese,² apples and hard cider for all. Come and have a good time.

Slavery being of importance to the culture of Missouri, the people feared any abolitionist sentiment. But more than that, they

²Cecil McGavin, Nauvoo, The Beautiful (Salt Lake City, Utah: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1946), 66.

feared anyone or anything that would generate a slave uprising. And the rumor had circulated extensively that the Mormons were trying to "tamper" with their slaves. Naturally, such a rumor would cause controversy as well as hatred toward the Mormons. Feeling the heat of the controversy, the Mormons reacted through their publication

The Evening and Morning Star:

To prevent any misunderstanding among the churches abroad, respecting free people of color, who may think of coming to the western boundaries of Missouri, as members of the Church, we quote the following clauses from the laws of Missouri:

If any Negro or mulatto come into the state of Missouri, without a certificate from a court of record in some one of the United States, evidencing that he was a citizen of such state, on complaint before any justice of the peace, such Negro or mulatto could be commanded by the justice to leave the state; and if the colored person so ordered did not leave the state ...commit him to the common jail of the country... and if it was found that the Negro or mulatto had remained in the state contrary to the provision of this statute, the court was authorized to sentence such person to receive ten lashes on his or her bare back.³

Missouri law prevented free Negroes from staying in the state because the people naturally feared what they would do to incite the slaves to insurrection. By passing laws against their entry, such fears could at least be arrested. Commenting on such fears as they existed in the South, Allan Nevins says:

In reality, Southern kindness was chiefly for Negroes in slavery and was that type of amiability always engendered in superior groups by an immutable caste system. It seldom extended to free Negroes, who were regarded with even greater hostility than in the North. Behind this antagonism lay an apprehension of the dangers to the existing order that lurked in the very existence of any large body of freedmen. If they grew numerous, educated, and economically unsure, they would arouse the envious

³"Free People of Color," Evening and Morning Star (July 1, 1833) 218.

discontent of the slaves, become a rallying point against the existing order, and ultimately reduce slavery to atoms. The South therefore took precautions against their rise to strength. Most slaveholders would have said with Spite Calderwood: "Don't want no free niggers 'round' here."⁴

Such was the attitude in Missouri toward free people of color, and it was believed that the Mormons were also trying to encourage such people to enter the state. To clarify any rumor of this kind, the editor of the Star commented on Missouri law and what it might mean to members of the Church:

Slaves are real estate in this and other states, and wisdom would dictate great care among the branches of the Church of Christ on this subject. So long as we have no special rule in the Church as to people of color, let prudence guide; and while they as well as we, are in the hands of a merciful God, we say: shun every appearance of evil.⁵

For later reference, it should be noted that there was "no special rule in the Church as to people of color" at this time. The position of the Church in regard to the Negro obviously evolved. In spite of the editor's sincere effort to make clear the Church's desire to respect the slave laws, it had no effect on Missourians. Perhaps previous prejudice precluded their acceptance of the explanation. Perhaps they were fearful of losing their excuse for persecution of the Mormons. Making a final effort, the Star published a follow-up article in which a distinct Mormon attitude toward slavery and the Negro was crystallized:⁶

⁴ Nevins, 524.

⁵ "Free People of Color," 219.

⁶ It should be noted that editorials in the early days of the Church were more indicative of Church policy than they are today. The Church was smaller, more unified, and estranged from the rest of the

Our intention was not only to stop free people of color from emigrating to this state, but to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church. Great care should be taken on this point. The saints must shun every appearance of evil. As to slaves we have nothing to say. In connection with the wonderful events of this age, much is doing toward abolishing slavery, and colonizing the blacks in Africa.

We often lament the situation of our sister states in the South, and we fear, lest, as has been the case, the blacks should rise and spill innocent blood; for they are ignorant, and a little may lead them to disturb the peace of society. To be short, we are opposed to have free people of color admitted into the state; and to have free people of color admitted into the church, for we are determined to obey the laws and constitution of our country, that we may have that protection which the sons of liberty inherit from the legacy of Washington, through the favorable auspices of a Jefferson, and Jackson.

With this "Extra" edition of the Star, a suggestion of Mormon discrimination toward the Negro was enunciated. A statement in support of sending the Negro back to Africa in the well known colonization experiment is suggestive of such a feeling. After a recognition of the nature of the fear of Missourians that the "blacks should rise and spill innocent blood," the editor gave to the Negro a solemn warning that they would not be "admitted into the church." Undoubtedly this extreme stand was precipitated by the antagonism of Missourians, and a desire by the Mormons to retain a status quo in Missouri. The Mormons attempted to make it clear that they were not stirring up trouble among slaves, and had no intention of instigating them to bloodshed. Obviously, even this last statement did not reduce the persecution given to the Mormons; soon they were driven from the state. At least the charge of tampering with slaves was a good excuse for driving them from the

world; as a result, an editorial in one of their newspapers was a strong indication of Church policy and attitude.

⁷Evening and Morning Star, Extra Edition (July 16, 1833).

state, much better perhaps than other more honest causes. At any rate, the Mormons had indicated a stand against the Negro and slavery, which could have planted a seed growing into the later Church policy with respect to the Negro race. Actually, the Mormons could not have taken the risk of espousing the Negro cause even if they had wanted to make such a stand. Their cultural and religious differences were making life difficult enough for them, without the addition of the heated slavery issue.

Parley P. Pratt in 1839 ventured the estimate that from the time of the organization of the Church in 1830, there had not been more than one dozen Negroes or Mulattoes in the Church. In support of the Mormon attitude in Missouri, he made this statement:

Concerning free negroes and mulattoes. Do not the laws of Missouri provide abundantly for the removal from the state of all free negroes and mulattoes (except certain privileged ones)? And also for the punishment of those who introduce or harbor them? The statement concerning our invitations to them to become Mormons, and remove to this state, and settle among us, is a wicked fabrication, as no such thing was ever published in the Star, or any where else, by our people, or anything in the shadow of it; and we challenge the people of Jackson County, or any other people, to produce such a publication from us. In fact one dozen free negroes or mulattoes never have belonged to our society in any part of the world, from its first organization to this day.

Pratt's firm defense of the Mormon attitude illustrates the very real concern the Mormons felt for the matter. They were determined that their stand be understood clearly.

Of vital importance in the consideration of Mormon attitudes on the subject of slavery are the statements of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. To avoid confusion, it should be realized that Smith

⁸ Parley P. Pratt, History of the Persecutions of the Saints (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1840), 27.

and his successor Brigham Young were both ambivalent on the subject of slavery. In 1836, Smith wrote some of his beliefs in an article for the Messenger and Advocate:

I do not believe that the people of the North have any more right to say that the South shall not have slaves, than the South have to say the North shall.

And further, what benefit will it ever be to the slaves for persons to run over the free states, and excite indignation against their masters in the minds of thousands and tens of thousands who understand nothing relative to their circumstances or conditions? I mean particularly those who have never traveled in the South, and who in all their lives have scarcely seen a negro. How any community can ever be excited with the chatter of such persons, boys and others, who are too indolent to obtain their living by honest industry, and are incapable of pursuing any occupation of a professional nature, is unaccountable to me; and when I see persons in the free states, signing documents against slavery, it is no less in my mind, than an army of influence, and a declaration of hostilities against the people of the South. What course can sooner divide our union?

Certainly there is no hint of abolition sentiment in these statements; in fact his major point is that chatter against slavery can only cause more friction within the union. Perhaps these paragraphs could be as easily attributed to Abraham Lincoln as to Joseph Smith. Smith then clarified the attitude he thought the Church should adopt in relation to slaves:

All men are to be taught to repent; but we have no right to interfere with slaves, contrary to the mind and will of their masters. In fact it would be much better and more prudent not to preach at all to slaves until after their masters are converted, and then teach the masters to use them with kindness; remembering that they are accountable to God, and the servants are bound to serve their masters with singleness of heart, without murmuring.¹⁰

⁹ Joseph Smith, Jr., Messenger and Advocate, II (April 1836), 289.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The slave was accountable to the master, and the master accountable to God. But the slave should realize that he was "bound to serve" his master. Seemingly the root of this belief was the theory that the Negro is cursed in this life. The Prophet explained the curse in these terms:

After having expressed myself so freely upon this subject, I do not doubt, but those who have been forward in raising their voices against the South, will cry out against me as being uncharitable, unkind, and wholly unacquainted with the Gospel of Christ. It is my privilege then to name certain passages from the Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in his generation, and walked with God. And so far from that prediction being averse to the mind of God, it remains as a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah, to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude. "And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." (Gen. 9:25, 26)¹¹

Since the institution of slavery seemed a worthy outlet for the curse upon the Negro race, no one should interfere with it at the risk of being condemned himself. Any interference with slavery could certainly bring about such condemnation. No abolitionist, Joseph Smith commented in 1838 that "we do not believe in setting the Negroes free."¹² Yet in 1843 he made the following comments on the potential of the Negro:

Change their situation with the whites, and they would be like them. They have souls, and are subjects of salvation. Go into Cincinnati or any city, and find an educated negro, who rides in his carriage, and you will see a man who has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability. The slaves in Washington are more refined than many in high places, and the black boys will take the shine off

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Joseph Smith, Jr., Elders' Journal (Far West, Missouri, July 1838), 42.

many of those they brush and wait on.

Elder Hyde remarked, "Put them on the level, and they will rise above me." I replied, if I raised you to be my equal, and then attempted to oppress you, would you not be indignant and try to rise above me, as did Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and many others, who said I was a fallen Prophet, and they were capable of leading the people, although I never attempted to oppress them, but had always been lifting them up? Had I anything to do with the Negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own kind, and put them on a national equalization.

It is uncertain as to whether an evolution of thought occurred or whether Smith was not sure himself of his stand on the Negro. Here he talked of a "national equalization" and espoused the principle of segregation. Then in 1844, the Prophet enunciated an abolitionist policy. Perhaps such a reversal was triggered by his announced candidacy for the Presidency of the United States. Whether the new policy was caused by social or political reasons is uncertain, but the change is interesting:

Petition, also, ye goodly inhabitants of the slave states, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850, or now, and save the abolitionists from reproach and ruin, infamy and shame.

Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress.

Break off the shackles from the poor black man and hire his labor like other human beings; for 'an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage.'¹⁴

He advocated the actual freeing of the slaves. The position is a complete reversal of Smith's personal stand as well as the apparent position of the Church. William Mulder, a prominent student of Mormon

¹³ Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News, 1902), January 1843, V, 217.

¹⁴ Joseph Smith, "Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States," Millennial Star, XXII (Nov. 10, 1860... originally written Feb. 1844), 743.

History, explains it effectively when he states that "The Mormons were not in fact abolitionists, but gradualists. Joseph Smith in 1844 advanced the progressive idea that the National government should purchase the slaves from their owners with money from the sale of public lands."¹⁵ Perhaps Smith believed in moving with the times, and that the need for the removal of slavery had arrived. Nevertheless, his proposal was not adopted; and the Mormons themselves practiced slavery for a number of years after the death of Joseph Smith. Apparently, his later position was not a clear reversal to the Church. At least they did not regard it as a mandate for a change in their attitude toward slavery. Since Smith's views were ambivalent, the Church was probably unclear as to his true feelings. Smith's successor as President of the Church, Brigham Young, supported Smith's original views on the issue. The stand taken by Young, of course, is vividly colored by his own aggressive personality:

The principle of slavery I understand, at least I have self confidence enough in God to believe I do. I believe still further that a great many others understand it as I do. A great portion of this community have been instructed, and have applied their minds to it, and as far as they have, they agree precisely in the principles of slavery. My remarks in the first place will be upon the cause of the introduction of slavery. Long ago Mama Eve our good old Mother Eve partook of forbidden fruit and this made a slave of her. Adam hated very much to have her taken out of the garden of Eden, and now our old daddy says I believe I will eat of the fruit and become a slave too. This was the first introduction of slavery upon this earth, and there has been not a son or daughter of Adam from that day to

¹⁵William Mulder, "The Mormons in American History" (21st Annual Reynolds Lecture, Salt Lake City, Utah: Extension Division of University of Utah) XLVI, No. 11, January 14, 1957.

this but what were slaves in the true sense of the word.¹⁶

This homely example is intended to universalize the effects of slavery by placing everyone since Adam and Eve under its yoke. He continued by qualifying his beliefs in relation to the need of slavery, the fate of the Negro to remain in bondage, and the necessity for humane treatment in the management of slaves:

I am as much opposed to the principle of slavery as any man in the present acceptation or usage of the term. It is abused. I am opposed to abusing that which God decreed, to take a blessing and make a curse of it. It is a great blessing to the seed of Adam to have the seed of Cain for servants, but those they serve should use them with all the heart and feeling, as they would use their own children and their compassion should reach over them and round about them, and treat them as kindly, and with that humane feeling necessary to be shown to mortal beings of the human species. Under these circumstances their blessings in life are greater in proportion than those who have to provide the bread and dinner for them.¹⁷

According to Young's view, slavery was a "blessing" to both slave and master when both took their roles seriously. His attitude was colored with the paternalistic approach to the Negro held by many Southern slavery apologists. The belief that Negroes are destined to slavery provided there is provision for humane treatment, is reminiscent of the traditional Southern view. The Negro belonged in slavery. Young concluded this significant address before the legislature with the resounding reminder that Negroes must be servants, setting a tone even more closely allied to the Southern view:

It is for you and I to take a course, to bind our feelings together in an everlasting bond of union inasmuch as we Love the

¹⁶ Brigham Young, Speech in Joint Session of Legislature on Feb. 5, 1852, giving his views on slavery. M.S. Church Historian's Office, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid. 5.

Lord, which we ought to do more than ourselves. Consequently I will not consent for a moment to have the children of Cain rule me nor my brethren. No, it is not right. But, say some, is there anything of this kind in the constitution of the U.S.? If you will allow me the privilege of telling you right out, it is none of their damned business what we do or say here.... It is written right out in the constitution, "that every free white male inhabitant above the age of twenty-one years."¹⁸

In spite of what general feeling in the country may dictate, Negroes in Utah were to remain in servitude. He wanted it known that his position on this topic was immovable. This firm position perhaps stemmed not so much from a desire for slavery, but rather a desire to keep Utah sovereign and apart from the rest of the world. Persecution had caused him to want estrangement from the world. In a speech in 1856, he made a significant comment:

It is not the prerogative of the President of the United States to meddle with this matter, and Congress is not allowed, according to the Constitution, to legislate upon it. If Utah was admitted into the Union as a sovereign state, and we chose to introduce slavery here, it is not their business to meddle with it; and even if we treated our slaves in an oppressive manner, it is still none of their business and they ought not to meddle with it.¹⁹

Even from a States Rights standpoint, Young sounded like a Southerner. Perhaps the most famous statements Brigham Young ever made on slavery were those he uttered to Horace Greeley, the well-known abolitionist and editor of the New York Tribune, on July 13, 1859. Mr. Greeley was involved in an overland journey from New York to San Francisco during the Summer of 1859. While in Salt Lake City for a brief stay with Mormons, Greeley had an interesting interview

¹⁸Ibid. 6.

¹⁹Journal of Discourses (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1952), IV, 39-40.

with Brigham Young, at which time the latter expressed his candid views on slavery:

- H.G. What is the position of your church with respect to slavery?
- B.Y. We consider it of divine institution, and not to be abolished until the curse pronounced on Ham shall have been removed from his descendants.
- H.G. Are any slaves now held in this territory?
- B.Y. There are.
- H.G. Do your territorial laws uphold slavery?
- B.Y. Those laws are printed---you can read for yourself. If slaves are brought here by those who owned them in the states, we do not favor their escape from the service of their owners.
- H.G. Am I to infer that Utah, if admitted as a member of the Federal Union, will be a slave state?
- B.Y. No; she will be a free state. Slavery here would prove useless and unprofitable. I regard it generally as a curse to the masters. I myself hire many laborers and pay them fair wages; I could not afford to own them. I can do better than subject myself to an obligation to feed and clothe their families, to provide and care for them in sickness and health. Utah is not adapted to Slave Labor.²⁰

Ambivalence also colors Young's attitude; he talked of slavery as "of divine institution" and yet it was not practical in Utah. He said in essence that God inspired its inception, and therefore no man should tamper with it. This view is identical with the early view of Joseph Smith. And yet Young deemed slavery unprofitable for Utah and therefore undesirable. However, this recognition of the lack of profit gained from slavery in Utah was not a recommendation for freeing of slaves anywhere.

Elaborating upon the curse upon the Negro race spoken of by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young made these comments:

²⁰ Horace Greeley, Overland Journey From New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859, ed. by Charles T. Duncan (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 179, 180.

You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race---that they should be the "servants of servants"; and they will be until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionist cannot help it, nor in the least alter the decree. How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam's children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed.²¹

Besides declaring the abolitionists wrong in desiring freedom for the Negro because of a curse, Young explained the now familiar position of the Mormon Church with regard to the Negro---that he cannot hold the Priesthood of the Church. The paternalistic, kindly attitude of the Mormons toward the Negro emerges as a close parallel to the one held by the traditional South. Religious arguments were used frequently by apologists for the Southern slavery system. It would seem safe to conclude that the Mormon attitude was compatible with that of the South in defining slavery as "of divine institution."

Going even further in defining the curse, Young hit a touchy subject, that of intermarriage, when he said, "Shall I tell you the

²¹ Journal of Discourses (Speech of October 1859), VII, 290, 291.

law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so."²² This firm stand on intermarriage follows closely the position of the South and emphasizes the seriousness of the curse. Then Young made an interesting reference to personal experience:

I am neither an abolitionist nor a pro-slavery man. If I could have been influenced by private injury to choose one side in preference to the other, I should certainly be against the pro-slavery side of the question, for it was pro-slavery men that pointed the bayonet at me and my brethren in Missouri, and said, "Damn you we will kill you." I have not much love for them, only in the Gospel...²³

In this comment, the seriousness of the curse upon the Negro suddenly slipped into the background; and personal prejudice emerged as a governing factor in his stand. But it is clear that Young's major concern with respect to slavery was the way in which the slaves were handled. It seems as though slavery itself was not wrong to him, but the inhumane manner in which many slaves across the country were treated gave him cause for disturbance:

Will the present struggle free the slave? No; but they are now wasting away the black race by thousands. Many of the blacks are treated worse than we treat our dumb brutes; and men will be called to judgment for the way they have treated the negro, and they will receive the condemnation of a guilty conscience, by the just judge whose attributes are justice and truth.

Treat the slaves kindly and let them live, for Ham must be the servant of servants until the curse is removed.²⁴

²²Ibid. (March 1863), X, 110.

²³Ibid. 111.

²⁴Ibid. (October 1863), 250.

With this expression of the importance of humane treatment, there is also the key to the Mormon attitude. Slavery itself was an acceptable practice, but slaves must be treated with kindness. There is no indication that slaves were treated unkindly by their Mormon masters. Apparently most of them practiced the teachings of their leaders in reference to this point. "Aunt" Jane James, colored servant in the Prophet Joseph Smith's home, told of the method in which she was treated by the Prophet:

Yes, indeed, I guess I did know the Prophet Joseph. That lovely hand! He used to put it out to me. Never passed me without shaking hands with me wherever he was. Oh, he was the finest man I ever saw on earth. I did not get much of a chance to talk with him. He'd always smile, always just like he did to his children. He used to be just like I was his child. O yes, my I used to read in the Bible so much and in the Book of Mormon and Revelation, and now I have to sit and can't see to read, and I think over them things, and I tell you I do wake up in the middle of the night, and I just think about Brother Joseph and Sister Emma and how good they was to me.

Her account represents an example of the Prophet Joseph Smith exhibiting kindness to a Negro. But this quotation is interesting also because it is filled with the paternalistic attitude toward the Negro which seemed to be common to the Mormon attitude. Smith treated Jane James "just like I was his child." Another possible example of kindness in slavery is found in the case of Liz Flake, a slave belonging to Agnes and James M. Flake. She accompanied them to the Salt Lake Valley in 1843. When James Flake died, Agnes and her servant Liz went to

²⁵"Aunt" Jane James, "Joseph Smith, The Prophet," Young Women's Journal, XVI (December 1905), 551.

San Bernardino with the Amasa M. Lyman Company in 1850. Agnes soon became very ill and told Liz to go and bring two neighbor women. When Liz returned Agnes died. Liz was so grief stricken that the women could not quiet her, until one of them finally said, "You should be glad your mistress is gone, now she can't whip you any more." Liz jumped to her feet and angrily pushed the woman out of the door. "You can't talk like that about my mistress when she isn't able to defend herself. She was the best woman that lived; she was not mean to me; she never hit me; I love her better than anyone in the world. You can't stay in this house." The Negro slave Liz never spoke to the woman again.²⁶ These are two indications that the kindness spoken of by Mormon leaders was in fact practiced toward their slaves. There certainly is no record of treatment rivaling the inhumane treatment practiced in many quarters of the South.

An interesting aspect of the Mormon attitude toward Negro slavery is its deep involvement in the issue of Indian slavery in the territory. Mormons often purchased Indian children who were sold into slavery in order to keep them from being mistreated or killed.²⁷ James Christensen, in a Master's Thesis on the social problems of the Negro population of Salt Lake City, makes the following cogent remark:

In 1850 Utah was the only Western territory which had Negro slaves. It was one of the few places in the U.S.

²⁶ Carter, 19.

²⁷ Juanita Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," Utah Historical Quarterly, XII (Jan.-April 1944), 6, 7.

where Negro and Indian slavery occurred in the same locale in the same period. Mormons countenanced Negro slavery among them while they abhorred the Indian slave traffic and legislated against it.

They thought Indians to be the same racial strain as themselves, while Negroes were a cursed people.²⁸

Slavery in Utah was a cultural carry-over from the South. If it had not been carried to Utah, perhaps Mormon attitudes would have developed differently. Although Brigham Young talked of slavery as if it were divinely inspired, there were other reasons for his favorable attitude toward it. It is certain that Mormons tended to "carry inferences from dogma into secular life."²⁹ It was inevitable that Mormon attitudes toward slavery would become connected with their religion. Brigham Young expressed it in the following terms:

We cannot talk about spiritual things without connecting with them temporal things, neither can we talk about temporal things without connecting spiritual things with them. They are inseparably connected....We, as Latter-day Saints, really expect, look for and we will not be satisfied with anything short of being governed and controlled by the word of the Lord in all our acts, both spiritual and temporal. If we do not live for this, we do not live to be one with Christ.³⁰

Slavery, therefore, became a spiritual as well as a temporal consideration for the Mormons. Mormon attitudes supported slavery and segregation, and condemned intermarriage. Slavery was religiously acceptable providing masters exercised kindness. Humane treatment in slavery was really the only real concern of the Mormons. In

²⁸ Christensen, 11.

²⁹ Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958), 5.

³⁰ Journal of Discourses (Speech of June 22, 1864), X, 329.

general, their attitude toward the Negro was one of paternalism, rivaling that of the South. This attitude was fertile ground for the development of the Negro and the Priesthood doctrine.

CHAPTER IV

SLAVERY AND THE MORMON PRIESTHOOD

Relative to Negroes and the Mormon Priesthood, Andrew Jensen, formerly Assistant Historian for the L.D.S. Church, records the following:

Elijah Abel, the only colored man who is known to have been ordained to the Priesthood, was born July 25, 1810, in Maryland. Becoming a convert to "Mormonism" he was baptized in September, 1832, by Ezekial Roberts, and as appears from certificates, he was ordained an Elder March 3, 1836, and a Seventy April 4, 1841, an exception having been made in his case with regard to the general rule of the Church in relation to colored people. At Nauvoo, Illinois, where he resided, he followed the avocation of an undertaker. After his arrival in Salt Lake City he became a resident of the Tenth Ward, and together with his wife, he managed the Farnham Hotel in Salt Lake City. In Nauvoo he was intimately acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and later in life was the especial friend of the late Levi W. Hancock. In 1883, as a member of the Third Quorum of Seventy, he left Salt Lake City on a mission to Canada, during which he also performed missionary labors in the United States. Two weeks after his return he died, Dec. 25, 1884, of debility, consequent upon exposure while laboring in the ministry in Ohio. He died in full faith of the Gospel.¹

Today it is a well known fact that the Mormon Church forbids the Negro to hold the Priesthood, which is the authority given to male members of the Church in good standing. The above excerpt indicates that initially some Negroes were not denied the Priesthood, but were admitted to full membership in the Church. The Journal History of the Church records a communication from

¹Jensen, III, 577.

Elder William Appleby, a leader of the Church in the Eastern and Middle states, writing from Batavia, New York on June 2, 1847:

At this place I found a colored brother by the name of Lewis, a barber and an Elder in the Church, ordained by William Smith. This Lewis I am also informed has a son who is married to a white girl and both are members of the Church there. Now, dear Brother, I wish to know if this is the order of God or tolerated, to ordain Negroes to the Priesthood and allow amalgamation. If ²it is, I desire to know it, as I have yet to learn it.

These are two documented cases of Negroes who held the Priesthood in the early days of the Church. The Church was organized in 1830, and yet Appleby wondered as late as 1847 as to the correct Church policy. In an article for the Evening and Morning Star quoted previously, the editor spoke for the Church regarding slavery and free people of color. He said that "so long as we have no special rule in the Church as to people of color, let prudence guide."³ Apparently, the attitude of the Church toward the Negro was an evolutionary process. Originally at least the problem of Negro membership in the Church did not cause consternation. Apostle and Church historian, George A. Smith gives an interesting account of a Negro member in Ohio in the early days of the Church:

They had a meeting at the farm, and among them was a negro known generally as Black Pete, who became a revelatorFinally on one occasion, Black Pete got sight of one of these revelations carried by a black angel; he started after it, and ran off a steep wash bank twenty-five feet high,

²Journal History...June 2, 1847.

³"Free People of Color," Evening and Morning Star, July 1, 1833, 218.

passed through a tree top into the Chagrin river beneath.⁴

Even though Black Pete may have lost considerable respect from Church members on this occasion, he seems to have been accepted on a comparatively equal basis. Any evidence of restrictions on the Negro member in the early days of the Church is non-existent. Even the attitude by some Church members and leaders that the Negro is in some way inferior and should be treated as a servant, seems to have evolved. Mormon Church history is incomplete on how such discrimination may have developed. As far as Elijah Abel is concerned, there is no evidence of such discrimination; there is also nothing to indicate that Abel was ever under the bonds of slavery. The diary of L. John Nuttall, early Church leader, discusses Abel with reference to the Priesthood issue:

Saturday May 31st 1879 at the house of Prest A.O. Smoot. Provo City. Utah County, Utah - 5 P.M. - Prest John Taylor, Elders Brigham Young, A.O. Smoot, Zebedee Coltrin, and L. John Nuttall met, and the subject of ordaining Negroes to the Priesthood was presented. Prest Taylor said. Some parties have said to me that Zebedee Coltrin had talked to the Prophet Joseph Smith on this subject, and they said that he (Coltrin) thought it was not right for them to have the Priesthood....Brother Coltrin. The spring that we went up in Zion's camp in 1834 Bro. Joseph sent Bro. J.P. Green and me out South to gather up means to assist in gathering out the Saints from Jackson County, Mo. On our return home we got in conversation about the Negro having a right to the Priesthood, and I took up the side he had no right. Bro. Green argued that he had. The subject got so warm between us that he said he would report me to Brother Joseph when we got home for preaching false doctrine, which doctrine that I advocated was that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood. "All right," said I, "I hope you will." And when we got to Kirtland, we both went to Brother Joseph's office together to make our returns, and Bro. Green was as good as his word and reported to Bro. Joseph that I said that the Negro could

⁴ Journal of Discourses, XI, 4.

not hold the Priesthood. Bro. Joseph kind of dropped his head and rested it on his hand for a minute, and then said, "Bro. Zebedee is right, for the spirit of the Lord saith the Negro has no right nor cannot hold the Priesthood." He made no reference to scripture at all, but such was his decision. I don't recollect ever having any conversation with him afterwards on this subject. But I have heard him say in public that no person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood.

Brother Coltrin further said: Brother Abel was ordained a seventy because he had labored on the Temple, (it must have been in the 2nd Quorum) and when the Prophet Joseph learned of his lineage he was dropped from the Quorum, and another was put in his place....In the washing and anointing of Brother Abel at Kirtland, I anointed him and while I had my hands upon his head, I never had such unpleasant feelings in my life. And I said, "I never would again anoint another person who had Negro blood in him unless I was commanded by the Prophet to do so."⁵

There is no statement by Joseph Smith himself attesting to any such feelings or action to drop Abel from the Priesthood. How reliable Zebedee Coltrin's account may be is difficult to determine, especially since there is no other record to bear it out. The fact that Coltrin related the incidents over forty years after they occurred, and while he was in advanced years also detracts from their creditability. It is strange that if Joseph Smith did make such a stand with respect to the Negro this early in the Church's life, that he did not declare it publicly to the Church. It is also strange that if Elijah Abel was "dropped from the quorum" at the wish of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the 1840's, that he should have been called on a mission representing his Priesthood quorum in 1883, as Church records attest. It is evident that he remained a member of the Priesthood quorum and that he exercised his authority

⁵L. John Nuttall Diary, May 1879, 290. Taken from Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, Utah.

as a missionary in Canada. The fact that he did represent the quorum would support the conclusion that he used the Priesthood.

It is also interesting that John Taylor was the man who, as President of the Church in 1883, called Abel on his mission. It was also John Taylor who reportedly conducted the meeting in 1879 at which time Abel's right to the Priesthood was refuted. In a cogent letter to William E. Berrett, present leader in the Church school system and author of the book, The Church and the Negroid People, Nola Wallace discusses this question:

The real question seems to be whether there was in fact a direct commandment dealing specifically with the Negro's right to hold the Priesthood. If there was, when and where was it given, and why does there seem to be no direct, verifiable record of it available to us?

Why does it not appear to be part of our Doctrine and Covenants, along with other instructions concerning the Priesthood?

Why does it not appear to have been available to the men who met in Provo in 1879? Is it not strange that President Taylor should have had to learn Joseph Smith's attitude on the Negro question from Brothers Coltrin and Smoot, if there was a more authoritative source available to him?...

That a matter of utmost importance to so many can for so long have rested on such flimsy historical evidence attests too well to the depth of the prejudice which appears to have robbed Church policy makers of the will or ability to exercise critical faculties in this matter.

Mrs. Wallace views the origin of the Church policy on the Negro as a matter steeped in prejudice. Whether there was prejudice involved is not a matter that is possible to determine historically, but it is clear that Church policy evolved, and that there is uncertainty as to how and why it evolved. Such a doctrine

⁶Letter from Nola Wallace to William E. Berrett, June 24, 1962. Taken from copy sent to George T. Boyd of Los Angeles, California.

certainly was not a part of the Church format from its beginning.

John Nuttal also records in his diary that A. O. Smoot said some missionaries were laboring in the Southern States in 1835 and 1836, and they had to make a decision regarding the Negro:

There were Negroes who made application for baptism. And the question arose with them whether Negroes were entitled to hold the Priesthood. And by those brethren it was decided they would not confer the Priesthood until they had consulted the Prophet Joseph, and subsequently they communicated with him. His decision, as I understood was, they were not entitled to the Priesthood, nor yet to be baptized without the consent of their Masters.

In after years when I became acquainted with Joseph myself in Far West, about the year 1838, I received from Brother Joseph substantially the same instructions. It was on my application to him, what should be done with the Negro in the South, as I was preaching to them. He said I could baptize them by consent of their masters, but not to confer the Priesthood upon them.

Although this is another indication that Joseph Smith had reservations about giving the Negro the Priesthood, it did not come from him directly. Other leaders of the Church obviously had reservations about the matter. But whether this denial of the Priesthood to the Negro was a natural outgrowth of the slavery problem, or whether slavery was favored by the Mormons because of their doctrine of Negroes being ineligible to the Priesthood, is difficult to determine. The latter argument seems to have the greatest support. Again it is helpful to consider the words of Brigham Young:

The blacks should be used like servants, and not like brutes, but they must serve. It is their privilege to live so as to enjoy many of the blessings which attend obedience

⁷Nuttal Diary, 290.

to the first principles of the Gospel, though they are not entitled to the Priesthood.⁹

It seems clear from Young's expression that it was part of Church doctrine that Negroes must serve, and therefore slavery was a natural outgrowth of God's will. It is logical to conclude that because of their doctrine on the Negro, the Mormons deemed slavery a desirable institution.

At least one Church leader recently asserted that no Negro ever exercised the Priesthood. Harold B. Lee, present Apostle in the Church, uses Zebedee Coltrin's unsubstantiated account to support this contention. In answer to the question concerning colored people holding the Priesthood in the early days of the Church, he uses the following argument:

Now, Brethren, there is in Brother Andrew Jensen's Church Encyclopedia a statement that one, Elijah Abel, was ordained a seventy by Joseph Young, such and such a date. But they don't tell you that subsequent there to, when the Prophet Joseph Smith learned about it, he directed that his exercise of the Priesthood which had been improperly given should never be exercised. And Elijah Abel never served and exercised his Priesthood as a seventy. And every president of the Church during the lifetime of Elijah Abel followed exactly that same thing. And now our enemies and some of our smart boys who have read the encyclopedia by Andrew Jensen hold that up as here's one who did receive the Priesthood and exercise it. But he was ordained improperly. Keep in mind though, that in the infancy of the Church they didn't understand this clearly, but the Prophet nullified his exercise of the Priesthood promptly.

As has been previously stated, there is only the account of Coltrin to prove that Joseph Smith ever acted in this manner. And

⁹Record of Conference of French East Mission of L.D.S. Church, Geneva, Switzerland, Oct. 30, 1961. Taken from Church Historian's Office.

later events substantially point to the improbability of such a move. Nevertheless, either as an expression of the absolute nature of Mormon doctrine, or as an attempt to remove any causal relationship between slavery and denial of the Priesthood, some Mormon leaders seem bent on proving that Negroes have never been eligible to the Priesthood. Henry D. Moyle, former member of the First Presidency of the Church, shares the views of Elder Lee.¹⁰ These are indications of strong Mormon feeling on the Negro and his rights. Many would deem it a blotch on the reputation of the Church if it were generally believed that Negroes ever held the Priesthood.

The issue is at any rate clouded; the exact time and reason the Negro stand had its introduction into the Church is not clear. Previous Apostle John A. Widtsoe said the "cause of the black skin of the Negro is not known," and that "it is very probable that in some way, unknown to us, the distinction harks back to the pre-existent state."¹¹ The present Prophet and President of the Church, David O. McKay, says that he knows of "no scriptural basis for denying the Priesthood to the Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham(1:26). However, I believe...the real reason dated back to our pre-existent state."¹² Further, President McKay states:

This is a perplexing question, particularly in the light of the present trend of civilization to grant equality to all

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ John A. Widtsoe, Improvement Era (June 1944), XLVII, 385.

¹² Letter From David O. McKay to BYU student, Nov. 8, 1947, on file in Church Historian's Office.

men, irrespective of race, creed, or color. The answer, as I have thought it, cannot be found in abstract reasoning, for in this case, reason to the soul is as dim as the borrowed rays of moon and stars to lonely, weary, wandering travelers....This means that the true answer to your question (and it is the only one that has ever given me satisfaction) has its foundation in faith: (1) faith in a God of justice, (2) faith in existence of an eternal plan of salvation for all of God's children.¹³

Representing uncertainty and even distress toward the Negro question, these are candid comments from the President of the Church.

Whatever its origin, the Church doctrine on the Negro has endured to the present day. And the paternalistic attitude toward the Negro common to the South is strangely prevalent among Mormon leaders today, just as it was in the early days of the Church. Using a religious argument often propounded in the South, Apostle of the Church Mark E. Petersen says the following:

Now let's talk segregation again for a few moments. Was segregation a wrong principle? When the Lord chose the nations to which the spirits were to come, determining that some would be Chinese and some Negroes and some Americans, He engaged in an act of segregation. When He permitted the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael again He indulged in segregation. In the case of Jacob and Esau, He engaged in segregation....When he placed the mark upon Cain, He engaged in segregation...when he cursed the descendants of Cain as to the Priesthood, He engaged in segregation....

Who placed the Negroes originally in darkest Africa? Was it some man, or was it God? And when He placed them there, He segregated them....And He certainly segregated the descendants of Cain when He cursed the Negro as to the Priesthood, and drew an absolute line. The Negro was cursed as to the Priesthood, and therefore, was cursed as to the blessings of the Priesthood. Certainly God made a

¹³Ibid.

segregation there.¹⁴

Since only the Prophet is authorized to speak for the Church, Petersen's views cannot be considered Church doctrine or Church policy. Nevertheless, his views represent many Mormon leaders as well as members. Petersen uses an argument often preached by Southern leaders of present vintage and of Civil War times. His argument bears an extremely close resemblance to that of former Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi, who often preaches segregation as a principle originating with God.¹⁵ Since God authored such a principle, it is not man's prerogative to interfere with its function. Petersen's argument for segregation sounds much like Brigham Young's argument for leaving slavery alone. It seems to say that man should not tamper with anything which has been divinely instituted. It would seem that anything denoting servitude or subordination of the Negro race is favored in Mormon circles. Yesterday slavery was the vehicle, while today it is segregation. Both are cultural practices which were influenced by God, and therefore expressions of Negro destiny. Mark E. Petersen's views on segregation could represent an evolution of Brigham Young on slavery. Commenting on what the Negro may accomplish, Petersen continues:

Think of the Negro, cursed as to the Priesthood. Are we prejudiced against him? Unjustly, sometimes we are accused of having such a prejudice. But what does the mercy of God

¹⁴ Mark E. Petersen, Address "Race Problems--As They Affect The Church," delivered at Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, August 27, 1957. 5, 6. From Church Historian's Office.

¹⁵ Ross Barnett gave his views of segregation on the University of Utah Campus in February of 1964 during Challenge Week activities.

have for him? This negro who, in the pre-existence lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin, and possibly being born in darkest Africa---if that negro is willing when he hears the gospel to accept it, he may have many of the blessings of the Gospel. In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the negro accepts the gospel with real, sincere faith, and is really converted, to give him the blessings of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If that negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there¹⁶ as a servant, but he will get a celestial resurrection.

The Negro will remain in servitude even after death, according to Petersen. Since the Negro is supposed to have done something shameful in the pre-existence, the opportunity to be a servant in the Celestial Kingdom is considered a genuine blessing. The remarkable resemblance of the Mormon attitude toward the Negro to the Southern view is interesting; but any correlation between the Mormon doctrine on the Negro and the Mormon position on slavery is fascinating. Just as the Southern view of the worth and potential of the Negro has endured to the present, so has the corresponding Mormon view.

Both Church members and leaders differ on the reasons for the adoption of the Negro doctrine as well as to its validity. In spite of shaky historical evidence, many Mormons claim that no Negro ever exercised the Priesthood. This problem is important because it corresponds with the festering of the problem of slavery in the United States. Certainly because of Mormon doctrine it was easy for Mormons to accept and support slavery both in Utah and in the United States. Through history the paternalism of both Mormons and Southerners seems apparent; the Negro must be treated well, but he must serve.

¹⁶Petersen Address, 6.

CHAPTER V

OBSERVERS OF NEGRO SLAVERY IN UTAH

Information regarding what observers or travelers to Utah during the practice of slavery may have thought of the institution is definitely sparse. Even the few available accounts of these visitors are concerned mostly with doctrine of the Mormon Church, and more specifically with polygamy. As a result, any reflections they may have had on the topic of slavery as they witnessed it during their stays in the valley is overshadowed almost completely by the items they recognized to be more important. After all, Utah was interesting to the traveler because of the nature of the religious group who had traveled across the country to settle there and build their own city. Travelers were curious to find what made them different from other religions common to the United States. Since the prevalence of slavery was by no means large in contrast to the institution as it existed in the South, travelers were not looking for it; and even if they found it they deemed it of little concern when compared with larger, perhaps more interesting matters pertaining to the peculiar Mormons. And of course, most observers did not travel in the areas where most Negroes were working. Hence, observers' views and comments are scant on Utah slavery as it existed among the Mormons.

Of special interest, however, among observers' views are those of J. W. Gunnison, an engineer and Army officer who was killed

during his stay in Utah. Since Gunnison was considered accomplished in his field and was respected as a person, his views are of value. Slavery attracted his eye, even though other practices of the Mormons interested him more. His brief comment relative to slavery and the Mormon Priesthood is significant:

Involuntary labor by negroes is recognized by custom; those holding slaves, keeping them as part of their family ...without any law on the subject. Negro caste springs naturally from their doctrine of blacks being ineligible to the priesthood.¹

In Gunnison's view, slavery was a natural result of the Mormon doctrine of Negroes being cursed in relation to the Priesthood. A conclusion of this kind from an observer is especially noteworthy.

Another more enthusiastic observer of slavery and especially of Mormon attitudes, was the famous abolitionist, Horace Greeley. Greeley has been cited previously in relation to his interview with Brigham Young with regard to the latter's views on slavery. But Greeley did not express during that interview his own views regarding the Mormons and slavery. B. H. Roberts, in his Comprehensive History of the Church, relates an interesting account of Greeley's expression of such views at a Mormon banquet:

Mr. Greeley was disappointed in the lack of abolition sentiment in Salt Lake City, which he resented by saying at a banquet in his honor: "I have not heard tonight, and I think I never heard from the lips or journals of any of your people, one word in reprehension of that national crime and scandal, American Chattel slavery. This obstinate silence, this seeming indifference on your part, reflects no credit on your faith and morals, and I trust they will not be persisted in." This harsh, not to say dictatorial

¹J. W. Gunnison, The Mormons (New York: John Lovell Co., 1852), 143.

language was softened somewhat by Elder John Taylor—master of ceremonies at the reception and banquet tendered Mr. Greeley---saying: "The subject of slavery is one on which Mr. Greeley is known to be enthusiastic, as we are on the subject of our religion. We cannot help speaking of our religion at every opportunity as he cannot help speaking of slavery. Those who do not² relish this or that topic, must excuse its introduction.

It is true that Greeley was extremely enthusiastic about the topic of slavery, and as he stated, he was irritated that the Mormons expressed such a lack of concern for something he considered evil. It was a mystery to him that a people who had been persecuted and who had dedicated themselves to religion, would be so unconcerned with abolishing an institution which functioned by persecuting a race of people. To him abolitionism was the moral, religious doctrine of the day. Certainly Greeley was outspoken in choosing a banquet given in his honor to reprimand the very people who were doing him the honor. Nevertheless, John Taylor's adroit handling of the delicate situation indicated the truth of Mr. Greeley's assertion. Obviously, the Mormons were not that interested in slavery, and did not deem it as a means of persecuting the Negro. Probably Greeley's attitude toward the Mormon stand was exemplary of what the general abolitionist sentiment toward it would be.

Captain Richard F. Burton arrived in Salt Lake City on the 24th day of August, 1860. He stayed there and at Camp Floyd until September 20th of the same year. His book, called City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California, devotes eight of its

²B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1930), IV, 533.

thirteen chapters to the Mormons. Their life and customs must have aroused great interest in him. Although his observations are not always factually correct, their tone gives them worth:

Slavery has been legalized in Utah, but solely for the purpose of inducing the saints to buy children, who otherwise would be abandoned or destroyed by their starving parents. During my stay in the city, I did not see more than half-a-dozen negroes; and climate, which disdaining man's interference, draws with unerring hand the true and only compromise line between white and black labour, has irrevocably decided that the African in these latitudes is valueless as a chattel, because his keep costs more than his work returns. The Negro, however, is not admitted to the communion of Saints--rather a hard case for the Hamites, if it be true that salvation is nowhere to be found beyond the pale of the Mormon Church---and there are severe penalties for mixing the blood of Shem and³Japheth with the accursed race of Cain and Canaan.

Certainly the only reason slavery was legalized in Utah was not for the purpose of inducing the members of the Church to buy Indian children. The Mormon doctrine on the Negro and the carry-over of the Southern tradition were the chief factors sustaining slavery in the territory. Evidently Burton's one month stay in the city was not enough to give him adequate information on the subject. It is of interest, however, that Burton also mentions the Mormon doctrine with respect to the Negro; he also saw the connection between slavery and the Priesthood. But he was especially observant of the seeming unprofitability of slavery in Utah, largely due to the climate.

³Richard F. Burton, The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 298, 299.

Jules Remy, who wrote extensively concerning his journey to Great Salt Lake City, made only brief reference to the topic of slavery. He mentions an incident previously mentioned in this work, and documented in the Millennial Star. He supports the reliability of this incident by telling it in much the same manner as did the Star. Referring to Judge Drummond, notorious non-Mormon judge in the territory, he says "after a gambling quarrel, he ordered his negro Cato to assault and ill-use a Jew named Levi Abrahams, who had turned Mormon."⁴ Later he describes slavery itself mainly in reference to law:

Slaves coming into the Territory with their masters of their own free will, continue to be in all respects slaves, but cruelty and withholding of proper food, raiment, etc., makes the ownership void. Every master or mistress who has carnal relations with his or her negro slave forfeits his or her right to the slaves, who thereby becomes the property of the commonwealth. Every individual man or woman who has carnal relations with a negro or a negress who is not his or her property, is sentenced to imprisonment not exceeding three years, and to a fine of from 500 to 1000 dollars.⁵

These comments are mostly synopses of the laws he observed in Utah on slavery. Beyond essentially making a summary of these, he says nothing more profound. Law apparently appealed to Remy more than cultural practice, as evidenced by the remainder of his work. But the actual practice of slavery in the territory, and the specific manner in which it was administered, seem to have mattered little to him.

⁴Jules Remy, A Journey To Great Salt Lake City (London: W. Jeffs, 15, Burlington Arcade, 1861), I, 469, 470.

⁵Ibid. II, 237.

The editor of the Springfield, Massachusetts Republican, Samuel Bowles, made a later trip to the valley, when slavery had been removed from the United States. Bowles made a summer journey in 1865 with Schyler Colfax, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. In the process of the trip, he interviewed Brigham Young and others, and made numerous observations on Utah and the Mormons. With respect to slavery, Bowles comments:

The conversation I have alluded to with Brigham Young and some of his elders, on this subject of polygamy, was introduced by his inquiring of Mr. Colfax what the government and people of the East proposed to do with it and them, now that they had got rid of the slavery question.⁶

Using the elimination of slavery in the United States as an example, they then talked with Young about the possibility of eliminating the practice of polygamy in the same way. Obviously, this kind of approach with Brigham Young would end in failure, since he believed slavery to have been instituted by divine will. Bowles says further:

The conversation was continued on the subjects of punishing the leading rebels, and of slavery in the abstract. Mr. Young favored slavery per se as established by Divine Authority, but denounced the chattel system of the South; and he opposed the hanging of any of the rebel chiefs as an unwise and aggravating policy. Now that peace is established, let all be pardoned, he said; but early in or during the war, he would have disposed of the rebel chiefs that fell into the hands of the government without mercy or hesitation.⁷

Any views expressed by visitors as they came into Utah with

⁶Samuel Bowles, Across The Continent (Springfield, Mass: Samuel Bowles and Co., New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866), 111.

⁷Ibid. 113.

respect to the topic of slavery are few. Since these observers wrote about slavery only incidentally, there is little known today on slavery as it existed in Utah. The few observations available, however, support the existence of Negro slavery in Utah, even though it was on a small scale. Most visitors apparently also observed the connection between slavery and the Mormon Priesthood, and hinted at the causal relationship existing between them. Of most value is the affirmation by these observers of the definitely pro-slavery attitude held by Mormons. This could even have been the dominant aspect of the institution as it was observed in Utah.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At the time of the colonization of Utah, Negro slavery was an integral part of the social, cultural, and economic life of the South. The Negro caste system had indeed become a part of American custom and law. The nature of the institution differed according to the area and master involved, but essentially slave owners agreed on one thing: Negroes were inferior, and therefore slavery was their natural means of survival. Determined to retain the system, Southerners were convinced of its social and economic worth. Moreover, they justified it on religious grounds, arguing that servitude was favored and taught in the Bible, and that Negroes were destined to remain in bondage. Generally speaking, slave owners treated their slaves at least as well as they did other property; this was a necessity if they were to protect their investments. However, there were numerous cases of brutality, demonstrating that there was in fact another side of the slave system. Much of the South was definitely converted to the slave system, as well as being adapted to it socially and economically. What is more, they justified it and governed it through paternalism.

Since it was an accepted cultural practice, it is not surprising that the influence of slavery would spread to the Rocky Mountains. With the arrival of the Mormon pioneers into

the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Negro slavery also arrived. Slaves were brought into the valley mostly by Southern Mormon converts. Although the slavery practiced in Utah was on a much smaller scale than in the South, still there were some similarities. Since there was no law in Utah prohibiting slavery, it was practiced without concern. By virtue of the Compromise of 1850, Utah was left open to slavery, and was the only Western territory in 1850 in which Negroes were held as slaves. The legislature passed laws governing the institution, in an attempt to insure humane consideration for the Negro. The buying and selling of slaves was carried on in Utah to a limited extent. According to existing records, there were at least twenty-six slaves in Utah in 1850, and twenty-nine in 1860. Some slaves brought into the territory by Southern masters continued to California and there received their freedom. Others remained in bondage in Utah until the end of the Civil War. Descendants of slaves in Utah bear this record out; notable among them is Lucille Perkins Bankhead, great granddaughter of Green Flake, who has been careful about preserving records of her slave ancestors. Although there is little evidence of either kind or brutal treatment of slaves in Utah, that which does exist supports the former. It would seem that most slaves in Utah were treated with kindness, which was a direct result of strong Mormon feeling. Mormon leaders constantly preached that the Negro must be treated with kindness.

Although abolitionist sentiment was building up all around the country, Mormons gave such sentiment little thought. There was nothing in their religious creed which suggested that slavery was

an evil practice; in fact, Brigham Young assessed slavery as "of divine institution." While in Missouri, Mormons had been accused of attempting to instigate a slave insurrection, and at this time made their stand clear. There was "no special rule" in the Church with respect to the Negro, they said, but they did intend to obey the laws of the land and permit slavery to exist untouched. Later, however, a "special rule" did emerge, and Negroes were denied full membership in the Church because they belonged to a cursed race. No Negro, they said, could hold the Priesthood of the Church; although the reasons for such a denial were unclear, the doctrine had an interesting and solid connection with slavery. Just as Negroes were ineligible to the Priesthood because of a curse, so were they also destined to a life of servitude. Slavery was a natural expression of inferiority. The Mormon doctrine on the Negro, therefore, clarified the Mormon position on slavery.

Clearly, the Mormons were not abolitionists; actually, their position on the Negro closely resembled that of the South. This was not strange since Mormon slave owners had originally come from the South. Both Mormons and Southerners preached the inferior status of the Negro, and both met the problem through paternalism. The Mormon belief corresponded to the Southern view that slavery was indeed a blessing to the Negro. The religious argument in support of slavery was common to both. Even today a striking resemblance between Southerners' views on segregation and some Mormon leaders' views is apparent. Over the years, Southerners and Mormons have retained a close resemblance in their attitudes

toward the Negro. Certainly the institution of slavery was of greater importance to the South because of its size. Since it had a large population of Negroes, the South was concerned about the control of such a group. They feared that if the institution of slavery was to be lost, the control of the Negro race may also be lost. Brutality was a prevalent part of the slave system of the South. On these points then, Mormons did not belong with the South; on general attitudes toward the Negro race and his potential, there was no argument. Size was an important element in creating the difference.

Views on slavery given by visitors to Utah during the time of its function are interesting, though sparse. Generally, observers of Utah were more interested in "strange" doctrines of the Mormons such as polygamy. As a result, reference to the practice of slavery is scant in their accounts. It is also true that most observers failed to get farther than the Salt Lake City area during their visits; hence, they did not see the Negroes in outlying areas. Even these brief observations, however, indicate the existence of slaves and slave laws in the territory. Of special interest are these observers' comments on the relationship between the Mormon doctrine on the Negro and the Mormon position on slavery. Even brief visitors noted a direct relationship between the two; pro-slavery attitudes seemed to them a natural result of Negroes' ineligibility to the Priesthood. Certainly the connection is significant in assessing Mormon thought.

Negro slavery not only existed in Utah, but it was upheld

by Utah law. It is safe to conclude that slavery was important to the Mormon settlers of Utah; both religiously and culturally, it conformed to their attitudes. As an economic institution, slavery had no place; but as an extension of well-established traditions from the South, it did. Socially and culturally it fit into the Mormon society, and it found its strength to endure from religious justification. Mormon attitudes recognized that the Negro "must be treated with kindness, but he must serve."

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Vita

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Upon his return from New Zealand he again attended the University of Utah, where he was an active member of Lambda Delta Sigma and served as an officer of that fraternity. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History with a minor in English in August of 1964.

In September 1964, he returned to the University to begin studies for a Master's Degree, majoring in History and minoring in Educational Administration. Concurrent with his Graduate study, he held a teaching assistantship in the History Department of the University of Utah. He is a member of the National History Honorary Fraternity, Phi Alpha Theta.

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